An Adventure Story for Girls

The Secret Mark

Roy J. Snell

Charlotte Puttmann Nov. 7. 1930

If this book should
ever roam
Tickel its feet and
Send it home

New York City

Adventure Stories for Girls

The Secret Mark

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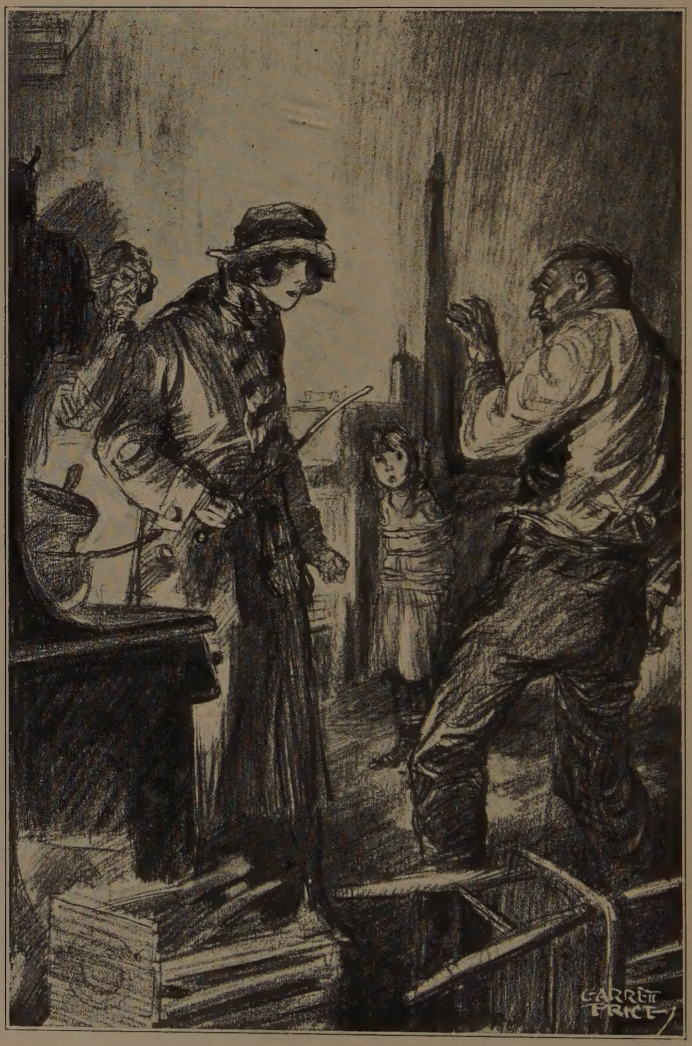

The man sprang back in fear—Chapter XII.

Adventure Stories for Girls

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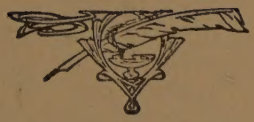
By

ROY J. SNELL



The Reilly & Lee Co.
Chicago

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The Secret Mark

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CHAPTER I

A MYSTERIOUS VISITOR

Lucile Tucker's slim, tapered fingers trembled slightly as she rested them against a steel-framed bookcase. She had paused to steady her shaken nerves, to collect her wits, to determine what her next move should be.

"Who can it be?" her madly thumping heart kept asking her.

And, indeed, who, besides herself, could be in the book stacks at this hour of the night?

About her, ranging tier on tier, towering from floor to ceiling, were books, thousands on thousands of books. The two floors above were full of books. The two below were the same. This place was a perfect maze of books. It was one of the sections of a great library, the

library of one of the finest universities of the United States.

In all this vast "city of books" she had thought herself quite alone.

It was a ghostly hour. Midnight. In the towers the great clock had slowly struck. Besides the striking of the clock there had been but a single sound: the click of an electric light snapped on. There had instantly gleamed at her feet a single ray of light. That light had traveled beneath many tiers of books to reach her. She thought it must be four but was not quite sure.

She had been preparing to leave the "maze," as she often called the stacks of books which loomed all about her. So familiar was she with the interior of this building that she needed no light to guide her. To her right was a spiral stairway which like an auger bored its way to the ground four stories below. Straight ahead, twenty tiers of books away, was a small electric elevator, used only for lifting or lowering piles of books. Fourteen tiers back was a straight

stairway. To a person unfamiliar with it, the stacks presented a bewildering labyrinth, but to Lucile they were an open book.

She had intended making her way back to the straight stairway which led to the door by which she must leave. But now she clutched at her heart as she asked herself once more:

"Who can it be? And what does he want?"

Only one thing stood out clearly in her bewildered brain: Since she was connected with the stacks as one of their keepers, it was plainly her duty to discover who this intruder might be and, if occasion seemed to warrant, to report the case to her superiors.

The university owned many rare and valuable books. She had often wondered that so many of these were kept, not in vaults, but in open shelves.

Her heart gave a new bound of terror as she remembered that some of these, the most valuable of all, were at the very spot from which the light came.

"Oh! Shame! Why be so foolish?" she

whispered to herself suddenly. "Probably some professor with a pass-key. Probably — but what's the use? I've got to find out."

With that she began moving stealthily along the narrow passageway which lay between the stacks. Tiptoeing along, with her heart thumping so loudly she could not help feeling it might be heard, she advanced step by step until she stood beside the end of the stack nearest the strange intruder. There for a few seconds she stuck. The last ounce of courage had oozed out. She must await its return.

Then with a sudden burst of courage she swung round the corner.

The next instant she was obliged to exert all her available energy to suppress a laugh. Standing in the circle of light was not some burly robber, but a child, a very small and innocent looking child.

Yet a second glance told her that the child was older than she looked. Her face showed that. Old as the face was, the body of the child appeared tiny as a sparrow's. A green

velvet blouse of some strangely foreign weave, a coarse skirt, a pair of heavy shoes, unnoticeable stockings and that face — all this flashed into her vision for a second. Then all was darkness; the light had been snapped out.

The action was so sudden and unexpected that for a few seconds the young librarian stood where she was, motionless. Wild questions raced through her mind: Who was the child? What was she doing in the library at this unearthly hour? How had she gotten in? How did she expect to get out?

She had a vaguely uneasy feeling that the child carried a package. What could that be other than books? A second question suddenly disturbed her: Who was this child? Had she seen her before? She felt sure she had. But where? Where?

All this questioning took but seconds. The next turn found her mind focused on the one important question: Which way had the child gone? As if in answer to her question, her alert ears caught the soft pit-pat of footsteps.

"She's going on to my right," she whispered to herself. "That's good. There is no exit in that direction, only windows and an impossible drop of fifty feet. I'll tiptoe along, throw on the general switch, catch her at that end and find out why she is here. Probably accepting a dare or going through with some childish prank."

Hastily she tiptoed down the aisle between the stacks. Then, turning to her left, she put out her hand, touched a switch and released a flood of light. At first its brightness blinded her. The next instant she stared about her in astonishment. The place was empty.

"Deserted as a tomb," she whispered.

And so it was. Not a trace of the child was to be seen.

"As if I hadn't seen her at all!" she murmured. "I don't believe in ghosts, but — where have I seen that face before? You'd never forget it, once you'd seen it. And I have seen it. But where?"

Meditatively she walked to the dummy ele-

vator which carried books up and down. She started as her glance fell upon it. The carrier had been on this floor when she left it not fifteen minutes before. Now it was gone. The button that released it was pressed in for the ground floor.

"She couldn't have," she murmured. "The compartment isn't over two feet square."

She stared again. Then she pressed the button for the return of the elevator. The car moved silently upward to stop at her door. There was nothing about it to show that it had been used for unusual purposes.

"And yet she might have," she mused. "She was so tiny. She might have pressed herself into it and ridden down."

Suddenly she switched off the lights and hurried to a window. Did she catch a glimpse of a retreating figure at the far side of the campus? She could not be sure. The lights were flickering, uncertain.

"Well," she shook herself, then shivered, "I guess that's about all of that. Ought to report

it, but I won't. They'd only laugh at me."

Again she shivered, then turning, tiptoed down the narrow passageway to carry out her original intention of going out of the building by way of the back stairs.

Her room was only a half block away in a dormitory on the corner of the campus nearest the library. Having reached the dormitory, she went to her room and began disrobing for the night. In the bed near her own, wrapped in profound sleep, lay her roommate. She wished to waken her, to tell her of the strange event of the night. For a moment she stood with the name "Florence" quivering on her lips.

The word died unspoken. "No use to trouble her," she decided. "She's been working hard lately and needs the sleep."

At last, clad in her dream robes, with her abundant hair streaming down her back and her white arms gleaming in the moonlight, she sat down by the open window to think and dream.

It was a wonderful picture that lay spread out before her, a vista of magnificent Gothic structures of gray sandstone framed in lawns of perfectly kept green. Sidewalks wound here, there, everywhere. Swarming with students during the waking hours, they were silent now. Her bosom swelled with a strange, inexpressible emotion as she realized that she, a mere girl, was a part of it all.

Like her roommate, she was one of the thousands of girls who to-day attend the splendid universities of our land. With little money, of humble parentage, they are yet given an opportunity to make their way toward a higher and broader understanding of the meaning of life through study in the university.

The thought that this university was possessed of fifty millions of dollars' worth of property, yet had time and patience to make a place for her, both awed and inspired her.

The very thought of her position sobered her. Four hours each week day she worked in the stacks at the library. Books that had been

read and returned came down to her and by her hands were placed in their particular niches of the labyrinth of stacks.

The work was not work to her but recreation, play. She was a lover of books. Just to touch them was a delight. To handle them, to work with them, to keep them in their places, accessible to all, this was joy indeed. Yet this work, which was play to her, went far toward paying her way in the university.

And at this thought her brow clouded. She recalled once more the occurrence of a short time before and the strange little face among the stacks. She knew that she ought to tell the head of her section of the library, Mr. Downers, of the incident. Should anything happen, should some book be missing, she would then be free from suspicion. Should suspicion fall upon her, she might be deprived of her position and, from lack of funds, be obliged to give up her cherished dream, a university education.

"But I don't want to tell," she whispered to

the library tower which, like some kindly, long-bearded old gentleman, seemed to be accusing her. "I don't want to."

Hardly had she said this than she realized that there was a stronger reason than her fear of derision that held her back from telling.

"It's the face," she told herself. "That poor little kiddie's face. It wasn't beautiful, no, not quite that, but appealing, frankly, fearlessly appealing. If I saw her take a book I couldn't believe that she meant to steal it, or at least that it was she who willed it.

"But fi-fum," she laughed a low laugh, throwing back her head until her hair danced over her white shoulders like a golden shower, "why borrow trouble? She probably took nothing. It was but a childish prank."

At that she threw back the covers of her bed, thrust her feet deep down beneath them and lay down to rest. To-morrow was Sunday; no work, no study. There would be plenty of time to think.

She believed that she had dismissed the scene

in the library from her mind, yet even as she fell asleep something seemed to tell her that she was mistaken, that the child had really stolen a book, that there were breakers ahead.

And that something whispered truth, for this little incident was but the beginning of a series of adventures such as a college girl seldom is called upon to experience. Being ignorant of all this, she fell asleep to dream sweet dreams while the moon out of a cloudless sky, beaming down upon the faultless campus, seemed at times to take one look in at her open window.

CHAPTER II

ELUSIVE SHAKESPEARE

The sun had been up for more than an hour when on the following morning Lucile lifted her head sleepily and looked at the clock.

"Sunday morning. I'm glad!" she exclaimed as she leaped out of bed and raced away for a cold shower.

As she dressed she experienced a sensation of something unfinished and at the same time a desire to hide something, to defend someone. At first she could not understand what it all meant. Then, like a flash, the occurrence of the previous night flashed upon her.

"Oh, that," she breathed.

She was surprised to find that her desire to shield the child had gained tremendously in strength while she slept. Perhaps there are forces we know nothing of, which work on the

inner, hidden chambers of our mind while we sleep, and having worked there, leave impressions which determine our very destinies.

Lucile was not enough of a philosopher to reason this all out. She merely knew that she did not want to tell anyone of the strange incident, no not even her roommate. And in the end that was just what happened. She told no one.

When she went back to her work on Monday night a whole busy day had passed in the library. Thousands of books had shot up the dummy elevator to have their cards stamped and to be given out. Thousands had been returned to their places on their shelves. Was a single book missing? Were two or three missing? Lucile had no way of knowing. Every book that had gone out had been recorded, but to look over these records, then to check back and see if others were missing, would be the work of weeks. She could only await developments.

She was surprised at the speed with which

these developments came. Mr. Downers, the superintendent, was noted for his exact knowledge regarding the whereabouts of the books which were under his care. She had not been working an hour when a quiet voice spoke to her and with a little start she turned to face her superior.

"Miss Tucker," the librarian smiled, "do you chance to have any knowledge of the whereabouts of the first volume of our early edition of Shakespeare?"

"Why, no," the girl replied quickly. "Why — er" — there was a catch in her throat — "is it gone?"

Mr. Downers nodded as he replied:

"Seems temporarily so to be. Misplaced, no doubt. Will show up later." He was still smiling but there were wrinkles in his usually placid brow.

"I missed it just now," he went on. "Strange, too. I saw it there only Saturday. The set was to be removed from the library to be placed in the Noyes museum. Considered

too valuable to be kept in the library. Very early edition, you know.

"Strange!" he puzzled. "It could not have been taken out on the car, as it was used only in the reference reading room. It's not there. I just phoned. However, it will turn up. Don't worry about it."

He turned on his heel and was gone.

Lucile stared after him. She wanted to call him back, to tell him that it was not all right, that it would not turn up, that the strangely quaint little person she had seen in the library at midnight had carried it away. Yet she said not a word; merely allowed him to pass away. It was as if there was a hand over her mouth forbidding her to speak.

"There can't be a bit of doubt about it," she told herself. "That girl was standing right by the shelf where the ancient Shakespeare was kept. She took it. I wonder why? I wonder if she'll come back. Why, of course she will! For the other volume, or to return the one she has. Perhaps to-night. Two volumes were too

heavy for those slim shoulders. She'll come back and then she shan't escape me. I'll catch her in the act. Then I'll find out the reason why."

So great was her faith in this bit of reasoning that she resolved that, without telling a single person about the affair, she would set a watch that very night for the mysterious child and the elusive Shakespeare. She must solve the puzzle.

That night as she sat in the darkened library, listening, waiting, she allowed her mind to recall in a dim and dreamy way the face and form of the mysterious child. As she dreamed thus there suddenly flashed into the foreground from the deepest depths of her memory the time and circumstance on which she had first seen that child. She saw it all as in a dream. The girl had been dressed just as she was Saturday at midnight. She had entered the stacks. That had been a month before. She had appeared leading an exceedingly old man. Bent with the weight of years, leaning upon a cane,

all but blind, the old man had moved with a strangely youthful eagerness.

He had been allowed to enter the stacks only by special request. He was an aged Frenchman, a lover of books. He wished to come near the books, to sense them, to see them with his age-dimmed eyes, to touch them with his faltering hands.

So the little girl had guided him forward. From time to time he had asked that he be allowed to handle certain volumes. He had touched each with a reverent hand. His touch had resembled a caress. Some few he had opened and had felt along the covers.

"I wonder why he did that," Lucile had thought to herself.

She paused. A sudden thought had flashed into her mind. At the risk of missing her quarry, she groped her way to the shelf where the companion to the stolen volume lay and took it down. Slowly she ran her fingers over the inner part of the cover.

"Yes," she whispered, "there is something."

She dared not flash on the light. To do so might betray her presence in the building. Tomorrow she would see. Replacing the volume in its accustomed niche, she again tiptoed to her post of waiting.

As she thought of it now, she began to realize what a large part her unconscious memory had played in her longing to shield the child. She had seen the child render a service to a feeble and all but helpless old man. Her memory had been trying to tell her of this but had only now broken through into her wakeful mind. Lucile was aroused by the thought.

"I must save her," she told herself. "I must. I must!"

Even with this resolve came a perplexing problem. Why had the child taken the book? Had she done so at the old man's direction? That seemed incredible. Could an old man, tottering to his grave, revealing in spite of his shabby clothing a one-time more than common intellect and a breeding above the average, stoop to theft, the theft of a book? And could

he, above all, induce an innocent child to join him in the deed? It was unthinkable.

"That man," she thought to herself, "why he had a noble bearing, like a soldier, almost, certainly like a gentleman. He reminded me of that great old general of his own nation who said to his men when the enemy were all but upon Paris: 'They must not pass.' Could he stoop to stealing?"

These problems remained all unsolved, for on that night no slightest footfall was heard in the silent labyrinth.

The next night was the same, and the next. Lucile was growing weary, hollow-eyed with her vigil. She had told Florence nothing, yet she had surprised her roommate often looking at her in a way which said, "Why are you out so late every night? Why don't you share things with your pal?"

And she wanted to, but something held her back.

Thursday night came with a raging torrent of rain. It was not her night at the library.

She would gladly have remained in her cozy room, wrapped in a kimono, studying, yet, as the chimes pealed out the notes of Auld Lang Syne, telling that the hour of ten had arrived, she hurried into her rubbers and ulster to face the tempest.

Wild streaks of lightning faced her at the threshold. A gust of wind seized her and hurried her along for an instant, then in a wild, freakish turn all but threw her upon the pavement. A deluge of rain, seeming to extinguish the very street light, beat down upon her.

"How foolish I am!" she muttered. "She would not come on a night like this."

And yet she did come. Lucile had not been in her hiding place more than a half hour when she caught the familiar pit-pat of footsteps.

"This time she shall not escape me," she whispered, as with bated breath and cushioned footstep she tiptoed toward the spot where the remaining Shakespeare rested.

Now she was three stacks away. As she paused to listen she knew the child was at the

same distance in the opposite direction. She moved one stack nearer, then listened again.

She heard nothing. What had happened? — the child had paused. Had she heard? Lucile's first impulse was to snap on a light. She hesitated and in hesitating lost.

There came a sudden glare of light. A child's face was framed in it, a puzzled, frightened face. A slender hand went out and up. A book came down. The light went out. And all this happened with such incredible speed that Lucile stood glued to her tracks through it all.

She leaped toward the dummy elevator, only to hear the faint click which told that it was descending. She could not stop it. The child was gone.

She dashed to a window which was on the elevated station side. A few seconds of waiting and the lightning rewarded her. In the midst of a blinding flash, she caught sight of a tiny figure crossing a broad stretch of rain-soaked green.

The next instant, with rubbers in one hand

and ulster in the other, she dashed down the stairs.

"I'll get her yet," she breathed. "She belongs down town. She'll take the elevated. There is a car in seven minutes. I'll make it, too. Then we shall see."

CHAPTER III

THE GARGOYLE

Down a long stretch of sidewalk, across a sunken patch of green where the water was to her ankles, down a rain-drenched street, through pools of black water where sewers were choked, Lucile dashed. With no thought for health or safety she exposed herself to the blinding tempest and dashed before skidding autos, to arrive at last panting at the foot of the rusted iron stairs that led to the elevated railway platform.

Pausing only long enough to catch her breath and arrange her garments that the child might not be frightened away by her appearance, she hurried up the stairs. The train came thundering in. There was just time to thrust a dime through the wicker window and to bound for the door.

Catching a fleeting glimpse of the dripping figure of the child, she made a dash for that car and made it. A moment later, with her ulster thrown over on the seat beside her, she found herself facing the child.

Sitting there curled up in a corner, as she now was, hugging a bulky package wrapped in oilcloth, the child seemed older and tinier than ever.

"How could she do it?" was Lucile's unspoken question as she watched the water oozing from her shoes to drip-drip to the floor below. With the question came a blind resolve to see the thing through to the end. This child was not the real culprit. Cost what it might, she would find who was behind her strange actions.

There is no place in all the world where a thunderstorm seems more terrible than in the deserted streets in the heart of a great city at night. Echoing and re-echoing between the towering walls of buildings, the thunder seems to be speaking to the universe. Flashing from

a thousand windows to ten thousand others, the lightning seems to be searching the haunts and homes of men. The whole wild fury of it seems but the voice of nature defying man in his great stronghold, the city. It is as if in thundering tones she would tell him that great as he may imagine himself, he is not a law unto himself and can never be.

Into the heart of a great city on a night like this the elevated train carried Lucile and the child.

On the face of the child, thief as she undoubtedly was, and with the stolen goods in her possession, there flashed not one tremor, not a falling of an eyelash, which might be thought of as a sign of fear of laws of nature, man or God. Was she hardened or completely innocent of guilt? Who at that moment could tell?

It would be hard to imagine a more desolate spot than that in which the car discharged its two passengers. As Lucile's eye saw the sea of dreary, water-soaked tenements and tumble-down cottages that, like cattle left out in the

storm, hovered beside the elevated tracks, she shivered and was tempted to turn back — yet she went on.

A half block from the station she passed a policeman. Again she hesitated. The child was but a half block before her. She suspected nothing. It would be so easy to say to the policeman, "Stop that child. She is a thief. She has stolen property concealed beneath her cape." The law would then take its course and Lucile's hands would be free.

Yet something urged her past the policeman, down a narrow street, round a corner, up a second street, down a third, still narrower, and up to the door of the smallest, shabbiest cottage of the whole tumble-down lot.

The child had entered here. Lucile paused to consider and, while considering, caught the gleam of light through a torn window shade. The cottage was one story and a garret. The window was within her range of vision. After a glance from left to right, she stepped beneath the porch, which gave her an opportunity

to peer through the opening. Here, deep in the shadows, she might look on at the scene within without herself being observed by those within or by passers-by on the street.

The picture which came to her through the hole in the shade was so different from that which one might expect that she barely suppressed a gasp. In the room, which was scrupulously clean and tidy, there were but two persons, the child and the old man who had visited the library. Through the grate of a small stove a fire gleamed. Before this fire, all unabashed, the child stripped the water-soaked clothing from her meager body, then stood chafing her limbs, which were purple with cold.

The old man appeared all absorbed in his inspection of the book just placed in his hands. Lucile was not surprised to recognize it as the second Shakespeare. From turning it over and over, he paused to open it and peer at its inside cover. Not satisfied with this, he ran his finger over the upper, outside corner.

It was then that Lucile saw for the first time the thing she had felt while in the library in the dark. A small square of paper, yellow with age, was in that corner, and in its center was a picture of a gargoyle. A strange looking creation was this gargoyle. It was with such as these the ancients were wont to decorate their mansions. With a savage face that was half man and half lion, he possessed the paws of a beast and the wings of a great bird. About two sides of this picture was a letter L.

"So that was it," she breathed.

The next moment her attention was attracted by a set of shelves. These ran across one entire end of the room and, save for a single foot of space, were entirely filled with books. The striking fact to be noted was that, if one were able to judge from the appearance of their books, they must all of them be of great age.

"A miser of books," she breathed.

Searching these shelves, she felt sure she located the other missing volume of Shakespeare. This decision was confirmed at last as

the tottering old man made his way to the shelf and filled some two inches of the remaining vacant shelf-space by placing the newly-acquired book beside its mate.

After this he stood there for a moment looking at the two books. The expression on his face was startling. In the twinkling of an eye, it appeared to prove her charge of book miser to be false. This was not the look of a Shylock.

"More like a father glorying over the return of a long-lost child," she told herself.

As she stood there puzzling over this, the room went suddenly dark. The occupants of the house had doubtless gone to another part of the cottage to retire for the night. She was left with two alternatives: to call a policeman and have the place raided or to return quietly to the university and think the thing through. She chose the latter course.

After discovering the number of the house and fixing certain landmarks in her mind, she returned to the elevated station.

"They'll not dispose of the books, that's cer-

tain," she told herself. "The course to be taken in the future will come to me."

Stealing silently into her room on her return, she was surprised to find her roommate awake, robed in a kimono and pacing the floor.

"Why, Florence!" she breathed.

"Why, yourself!" Florence turned upon her. "Where've you been in all this storm? Five minutes more and I should have called the matron. She would have notified the police and then things would have been fine. Grand! Can you see it in the morning papers? 'Beautiful co-ed mysteriously disappears from university dormitory in storm. No trace of her yet found. Roommate says no cause for suicide.'"

"Oh!" gasped Lucile, "you wouldn't have!"

"What else could I do? How was I to know what had happened? You hadn't breathed a word. You—"

Florence sat down upon her bed, dug her bare toes into the rug and stared at her roommate. For once in her life, strong, dependable, imperturbable Florence was excited.

"I know," said Lucile, removing her water-soaked dress and stockings and chafing her benumbed feet. "I — I guess I should have told you about it, but it was something I was quite sure you wouldn't understand, so I didn't, that's all. But now — now I've got to tell someone or I'll burst, and I'd rather tell you than anyone else I know."

"Thanks," Florence smiled. "Just for that I'll help you into dry clothes, then you can tell me in comfort."

The clock struck three and the girls were still deep in the discussion of the mystery.

"One thing is important," said Florence. "That is the value of the Shakespeare. Perhaps it's not worth so terribly much after all."

"Perhaps not," Lucile wrinkled her brow, "but I am awfully afraid it is. Let's see — who could tell me? Oh, I know — Frank Morrow!"

"Who's Frank Morrow?"

"He's the best authority on old books there is in the United States to-day. He's right here

in this city. Got a cute little shop on the fifteenth floor of the Marshal Annex building. He's an old friend of my father. He'll tell me anything I need to know about books."

"All right, you'd better see him to-morrow, or I mean to-day. And now for three winks."

Florence threw off her kimono and leaped into bed. Lucile followed her example and the next instant the room was dark.

CHAPTER IV

WHAT THE GARGOYLE MIGHT TELL

Frank Morrow was the type of man any girl might be glad to claim as a friend. He had passed his sixty-fifth birthday and for thirty-five years he had been a dealer in old books, yet he was neither stooped nor near-sighted. A man of broad shoulders and robust frame, he delighted as much in a low morning score at golf as he did in the discovery of a rare old book. His hair was white but his cheeks retained much of their ruddy glow. His quiet smile gave to all who visited his shop a feeling of genuine welcome which they did not soon forget.

His shop, like himself, reflected the new era which has dawned in the old book business. Men have come to realize that age lends worth to books that possessed real worth in the be-

ginning and they are coming to house them well. On one of the upper floors of a modern business block Frank Morrow's shop was flooded with sunshine and fresh air. A potted plant bloomed on his desk. The books, arranged neatly without a painful effort at order, presented the appearance of some rich gentleman's library. A darker corner, a room by itself, to the right and back, suggested privacy and seclusion and here Frank Morrow's finds were kept. Many of them were richly bound and autographed.

The wise and the rich of the world passed through Frank Morrow's shop, for in his brain there rested knowledge which no other living man could impart. Did a bishop wish to purchase an out-of-print book for his ecclesiastical library, he came to Frank Morrow to ask where it might be found. Did the prince of the steel market wish a folio edition of Audubon's "Birds of America"? He came to Frank and somewhere, in Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Frank found it for him. Authors came to him

and artists as well, not so much for what he could find for them as for what he might impart in the way of genial friendship and the lore of books.

It was to this man and this shop that Lucile made her way next morning. She was not prepared to confide in him to the extent of telling him the whole story of her mystery, for she did not know him well. He was her father's friend, that was all. She did wish to tell him that she was in trouble and to ask his opinion of the probable value of the set of Shakespeare which had been removed from the university library.

"Well, now," he smiled as he adjusted his glasses after she had asked her question, "I'll be glad to help you if I can, but I'm not sure that I can. There are Shakespeares and other Shakespeares. I don't know the university set — didn't buy it for them. Probably a donation from some rich man. It might be a folio edition. In that case — well" — he paused and smiled again — "I trust you haven't burned

this Shakespeare by mistake nor had it stolen from your room or anything like that?"

"No! Oh, no! Not — nothing like that!" exclaimed Lucile.

"Well, as I was about to say, I found a very nice folio edition for a rich friend of mine not so very long ago. The sale of it I think was the record for this city. It cost him eighteen thousand dollars."

Lucile gasped, then sat staring at him in astonishment.

"Eighteen thousand dollars!" she managed to murmur at last.

"Of course you understand that was a folio edition, very rare. There are other old editions that are cheaper, much cheaper."

"I — I hope so," murmured Lucile.

"Would you like to see some old books and get a notion of their value?" he asked.

"Indeed I would."

"Step in here." He led the way into the mysterious dark room. There he switched on a light to reveal walls packed with books.

"Here's a little thing," he smiled, taking down a volume which would fit comfortably into a man's coat pocket; "Walton's Compleat Angler. It's a first edition. Bound in temporary binding, vellum. What would you say it was worth?"

"I — I couldn't guess. Please don't make me," Lucile pleaded.

"Sixteen hundred dollars."

Again Lucile stared at him in astonishment. "That little book!"

"You see," he said, motioning her a seat, "rare books, like many other rare things, derive their value from their scarcity. The first edition of this book was very small. Being small and comparatively cheap, the larger number of the books were worn out, destroyed or lost. So the remaining books have come to possess great value. The story — "

He came to an abrupt pause, arrested by a look of astonishment on the girl's face, as she gazed at the book he held.

"Why, what — " he began.

"That," Lucile pointed to a raised monogram in the upper inside cover of the book.

"A private mark," explained Morrow. "Many rich men and men of noble birth in the past had private marks which they put in their books. The custom seems to be as old as books themselves. Men do it still. Let's see, what is that one?"

"An embossed 'L' around two sides of the picture of a gargoyle," said Lucile in as steady a tone as she could command.

"Ah! yes, a very unusual one. In all my experience I have seen but five books with that mark in them. All have passed through my hands during the past two years. And yet this mark is a very old one. See how yellow the paper is. Probably some foreign library. Many rare books came across the sea during the war. I believe —"

He paused to reflect, then said with a tone of certainty, "Yes, I know that mark was in the folio edition of Shakespeare which I sold last year."

His words caught Lucile's breath. For the moment she could neither move nor speak. The thought that the set of Shakespeare taken from the library might be the very set sold to the rich man, and worth eighteen thousand dollars, struck her dumb.

Fortunately the dealer did not notice her distress but pointing to the bookmark went on: "If that gargoyle could talk now, if it could tell its story and the story of the book it marks, what a yarn it might spin.

"For instance," his eyes half closed as the theme gripped him, "this mark is unmistakably continental — French or German. French, I'd say, from the form of the 'L' and the type of gargoyle. Many men of wealth and of noble birth on the continent have had large collections of books printed in English. This little book with the gargoyle on the inside of its cover is a hundred years old. It's a young book as ancient books go, yet what things have happened in its day. It has seen wars and bloodshed. The library in which it has reposed may

have been the plotting place of kings, knights and dukes or of rebels and regicides.

"It may have witnessed domestic tragedies. What great man may have contemplated the destruction of his wife? What noble lady may have whispered in its presence of some secret love? What youths and maids may have slipped away into its quiet corner to utter murmurs of eternal devotion?

"It may have been stolen, been carried away as booty in war, been pawned with its mates to secure a nobleman's ransom.

"Oh, I tell you," he smiled as he read the interest in her face, "there is romance in old books, thrilling romance. Whole libraries have been stolen and secretly disposed of. Chests of books have been captured by pirates.

"Here is a book, a copy of Marco Polo's travels, a first edition copy which, tradition tells us, was once owned by the renowned pirate, Captain Kidd. I am told he was fond of reading. However that may be, there certainly were men of learning among his crew. There never

was a successful gang of thieves that did not have at least one college man in it."

He chuckled at his own witticism and Lucile smiled with him.

"Well," he said rising, "if there is anything I can do for you at any time, drop in and ask me. I am always at the service of fair young ladies. One never grows too old for that; besides, your father was my very good friend."

Lucile thanked him, took a last look at the pocket volume worth sixteen hundred dollars, made a mental note of the form of its gargoyle, then handed it to him and left the room. She little dreamed how soon and under what strange circumstances she would see that book again.

She left the shop of Frank Morrow in a strange state of mind. She felt that she should turn the facts in her possession over to the officials of the library and allow them to deal with the child and the old man. Yet there was something mysterious about it all. That collector of books, doubtless worth a fortune, in surroundings which betokened poverty, the strange book

mark, the look on the old man's face as he fingered the volume of Shakespeare, how explain all these? If the university authorities or the police handled the case, would they take time to solve these mysteries, to handle the case in such a way as would not hasten the death of this feeble old man nor blight the future of this strange child? She feared not.

"Life, the life of a child, is of greater importance than is an ancient volume," she told herself at last. "And with the help of Florence and perhaps of Frank Morrow I will solve the mystery myself. Yes, even if it costs me my position and my hope for an education!" She paused to stamp the pavement, then hurried away toward the university.

CHAPTER V

THE PAPIER-MACHE LUNCH BOX

"But, Lucile!" exclaimed Florence after she had heard the latest development in the mystery. "If the books are worth all that money, how dare you take the risk of leaving things as they are for a single hour?"

"We don't know that they are that identical edition."

"But you say the gargoyle was there."

"Yes, but that doesn't prove anything. There might have been a whole family of gargoyle libraries for all we know. Besides, what if it is? What are two books compared to the marring of a human life? What right has a university, or anyone else for that matter, to have books worth thousands of dollars? Books are just tools or playthings. That's all they

are. Men use them to shape their intellects just as a carpenter uses a plane, or they use them for amusement. What would be the sense of having a wood plane worth eighteen thousand dollars when a five dollar one would do just as good work?"

"But what do you mean to do about it?" asked Florence.

"I'm going down there by that mysterious cottage and watch what happens to-night and you are going with me. We'll go as many nights as we have to. If it's necessary we'll walk in upon our mysterious friends and make them tell why they took the books. Maybe they won't tell but they'll give them back to us and unless I'm mistaken that will at least be better for the girl than dragging her into court."

"Oh, all right," laughed Florence, rising and throwing back her shoulders. "I suppose you're taking me along as a sort of bodyguard. I don't mind. Life's been a trifle dull of late. A little adventure won't go so bad and since it is endured in what you choose to consider a

righteous cause, it's all the better. But please let's make it short. I do love to sleep."

Had she known what the nature of their adventure was to be, she might at least have paused to consider, but since the things we don't know don't hurt us, she set to work planning this, their first nightly escapade.

Reared as they had been in the far West and the great white North, the two girls had been accustomed to wildernesses of mountains, forest and vast expanses of ice and snow. One might fancy that for them, even at night, a great city would possess no terrors. This was not true. The quiet life at the university, eight miles from the heart of the city, had done little to rid them of their terror of city streets at night. To them every street was a canyon, the end of each alley an entrance to a den where beasts of prey might lurk. Not a footfall sounded behind them but sent terror to their hearts.

Lucile had gone on that first adventure alone in the rain on sudden impulse. The second was

premeditated. They coolly plotted the return to the narrow street where the mysterious cottage stood. Nothing short of a desire to serve someone younger and weaker than herself could have induced Lucile to return to that region, the very thought of which sent a cold shiver running down her spine.

As for Flofence, she was a devoted chum of Lucile. It was enough that Lucile wished her to go. Other interests might develop later; for the present, this was enough.

So, on the following night, a night dark and cloudy but with no rain, they stole forth from the hall to make their way down town.

They had decided that they would go to the window of the torn shade and see what they might discover, but, on arriving at the scene, decided that there was too much chance of detection.

"We'll just walk up and down the street," suggested Lucile. "If she comes out we'll follow her and see what happens. She may go back to the university for more books."

"You don't think she'd dare?" whispered Florence.

"She returned once, why not again?"

"There are no more Shakespeares."

"But there are other books."

"Yes."

They fell into silence. The streets were dark. It grew cold. It was a cheerless task. Now and again a person passed them. Two of them were men, noisy and drunken.

"I — I don't like it," shivered Lucile, "but what else is there to do?"

"Go in and tell them they have our books and must give them up."

"That wouldn't solve anything."

"It would get our books back."

"Yes, but —"

Suddenly Lucile paused, to place a hand on her companion's arm. A slight figure had emerged from the cottage.

"It's the child," she whispered. "We must not seem to follow. Let's cross the street."

They expected the child to enter the elevated

station as she had done before, but this she did not do. Walking at a rapid pace, she led them directly toward the very heart of the city. After covering five blocks, she began to slow down.

"Getting tired," was Florence's comment. "More people here. We could catch up with her and not be suspected."

This they did. Much to their surprise, they found the child dressed in the cheap blue calico of a working woman's daughter.

"What's that for?" whispered Lucile.

"Disguise," Florence whispered. "She's going into some office building. See, she is carrying a pressed paper lunch box. She'll get in anywhere with that; just tell them she's bringing a hot midnight lunch to her mother.

"It's strange," she mused, "when you think of it, how many people work while we sleep. Every morning hundreds of thousands of people swarm to their work or their shopping in the heart of the city and they find all the carpets swept, desks and tables dusted, floors and stairs scrubbed, and I'll bet that not one in a hundred

of them ever pauses to wonder how it all comes about. Not one in a thousand gives a passing thought to the poor women who toil on hands and knees with rag and brush during the dark hours of night that everything may be spick and span in the morning. I tell you, Lucile, we ought to be thankful that we're young and that opportunities lie before us. I tell you — "

She was stopped by a grip on her arm.

"Wha — where has she gone?" stammered Lucille.

"She vanished!"

"And she was not twenty feet before us a second ago."

The two girls stood staring at each other in astonishment. The child had disappeared.

"Well," said Lucile ruefully, "I guess that about ends this night's adventure."

"I guess so," admitted Florence.

The lights of an all-night drug store burned brightly across the street.

"That calls for hot chocolate," said Florence. "It's what I get for moralizing. If I hadn't

been going on at such a rate we would have kept sight of her."

They lingered for some time over hot chocolate and wafers. They were waiting for a surface car to carry them home when, on hearing low but excited words, they turned about to behold to their vast astonishment their little mystery child being led along by the collar of her dress. The person dragging her forward was an evil looking woman who appeared slightly the worse for drink.

"So that's the trick," they heard her snarl. "So you would run away! Such an ungratefulness. After all we done for you. Now you shall beg harder than ever."

"No, I won't beg," the girl answered in a small but determined voice. "And I shan't steal either. You can kill me first."

"Well, we'll see, my fine lady," growled the woman.

All this time the child was being dragged forward. As she came opposite the two girls, the woman gave a harder tug than before and

the girl almost fell. Something dropped to the sidewalk, but the woman did not notice it, and the child evidently did not care, for they passed on.

Lucile stooped and picked it up. It was the paper lunch box they had seen the child carrying earlier in the evening.

"Something in it," she said, shaking it.

"Lucile," said Florence in a tense whisper, "are we going to let that beast of a woman get that child? She doesn't belong to her, or if she does, she oughtn't to. I'm good for a fight."

Lucile's face blanched.

"Here in this city wilderness," she breathed.

"Anywhere for the good of a child. Come on."

Florence was away after the woman and child at a rapid rate.

"We'll get the child free. Then we'll get out," breathed Florence. "We don't want any publicity."

Fortune favored their plan. The woman, still dragging the child, who was by now silently

weeping, hurried into a narrow dismal alley. Suddenly as she looked about at sound of a footstep behind her, she was seized in two vises and hurled by some mechanism of steel and bronze a dozen feet in air, to land in an alley doorway. At least so it seemed to her, nor was it far from the truth. For Florence's months of gymnasium work had turned her muscles into things of steel and bronze. It was she who had seized the woman.

It was all done so swiftly that the woman had no time to cry out. When she rose to her feet, the alley was deserted. The child had fled in one direction, while the two girls had stepped quietly out into the street in the other direction and, apparently quite unperturbed, were waiting for a car.

"Look," said Lucile, "I've still got it. It's the child's lunch basket. There's something in it."

"There's our car," said Florence in a relieved tone. The next moment they were rattling homeward.

"We solved no mystery to-night," murmured Lucile sleepily.

"Added one more to the rest," smiled Florence. "But now I *am* interested. We must see it through."

"Did you hear what the child said, that she'd rather die than steal?"

"Wonder what she calls the taking of our Shakespeare?"

"That's part of our problem. Continued in our next," smiled Lucile.

She set the dilapidated papier-mache lunch box which she had picked up in the street after the child had dropped it, in the corner beneath the cloak rack. Before she fell asleep she thought of it and wondered what had been thumping round inside of it.

"Probably just an old, dried-up sandwich," she told herself. "Anyway, I'm too weary to get up and look now. I'll look in the morning."

One other thought entered her consciousness before she fell asleep. Or was it a thought? Perhaps just one or two mental pictures. The

buildings, the street, the electric signs that had encountered her gaze as they first saw the child and the half-drunk woman passed before her mind's eye. Then, almost instantly, the picture of the street on which the building in which Frank Morrow's book shop was located flashed before her.

"That's queer!" she murmured. "I do believe they were the same!"

"And indeed," she thought dreamily, "why should they not be? They are both down in the heart of the city and I am forever losing my sense of location down there."

At that she fell asleep.

CHAPTER VI

"ONE CAN NEVER TELL"

When Lucile awoke in the morning she remembered the occurrence of the night before as some sort of bad dream. It seemed inconceivable that she and Florence, a couple of co-eds, should have thrown themselves upon a rough-looking woman in the heart of the city on a street with which they were totally unfamiliar. Had they done this to free a child about whom they knew nothing save that she had stolen two valuable books?

"Did we?" she asked sleepily.

"Did we what?" smiled Florence, drawing the comb through her hair.

"Did we rescue that child from that woman?"

"I guess we did."

"Why did we do it?"

"That's what I've been wondering."

Lucile sat up in bed and thought for a moment. She gazed out of the window at the lovely green and the magnificent Gothic architecture spread out before her. She thought of the wretched alleys and tumble-down tenements which would greet the eye of that mysterious child when she awoke.

"Anyway," she told herself, "we saved her from something even worse, I do believe. We sent her back to her little old tottering man. I do think she loves him, though who he is, her grandfather or what, I haven't the faintest notion.

"Anyway I'm glad we did it," she said.

"Did what?" panted Florence, who by this time was going through her morning exercises.

"Saved the child."

"Yes, so am I."

The papier-mache lunch box remained in its place in the dark corner when they went to breakfast. Both girls had completely forgotten it. Had Lucile dreamed what it contained she

would not have passed it up for a thousand breakfasts. Since she didn't, she stepped out into the bright morning sunshine, and drinking in deep breaths of God's fresh air, gave thanks that she was alive.

The day passed as all schooldays pass, with study, lectures, laboratory work, then dinner as evening comes. In the evening paper an advertisement in the "Lost, Strayed or Stolen" column caught her eye. It read:

"REWARD

"Will pay $100.00 reward for the return of small copy of The Compleat Angler which disappeared from the Morrow Book Shop on November 3."

It was signed by Frank Morrow.

"Why, that's strange!" she murmured. "I do believe that was the book he showed me only yesterday, the little first edition which was worth sixteen hundred dollars. How strange!"

A queer sinking sensation came over her.

"I — I wonder if she could have taken it," she whispered, "that child?

"No, no," she whispered emphatically after a moment's thought. "And, yet, there was the gargoyle bookmark in the inside cover, the same as in our Shakespeare. How strange! It might be — and, yet, one can never tell."

That evening was Lucile's regular period at the library, so, much as she should have liked delving more deeply into the mystery which had all but taken possession of her, she was obliged to bend over a desk checking off books.

Working with her was Harry Brock, a fellow student. Harry was the kind of fellow one speaks of oftenest as a "nice boy." Clean, clear-cut, carefully dressed, studious, energetic and accurate, he set an example which was hard to follow. He had taken a brotherly interest in Lucile from the start and had helped her over many hard places in the library until she learned her duties.

Shortly after she had come in he paused by her desk and said in a quiet tone:

"Do you know, I'm worried about the disappearance of that set of Shakespeare. Sort

of gives our section a long black mark. Can't see where it's disappeared to."

Lucile drew in a long breath. What was he driving at? Did he suspect? Did he —

"If I wasn't so sure our records were perfect," he broke in on her mental questioning, "I'd say it was tucked away somewhere and would turn up. But we've all been careful. It just can't be here."

He paused as if in reflection, then said suddenly:

"Do you think one would ever be justified in protecting a person whom he knew had stolen something?"

Lucile started. What did he mean? Did he suspect something? Had he perhaps seen her enter the library on one of those nights of her watching? Did he suspect her? For a second the color rushed flaming to her cheeks. But, fortunately, he was looking away. The next second she was her usual calm self.

"Why, yes," she said steadily, "I think one might, if one felt that there were circumstances

about the apparent theft which were not clearly understood.

"You know," she said as a sudden inspiration seized her, "we've just finished reading Victor Hugo's story of Jean Valjean in French. Translating a great story a little each day, bit by bit, is such a wonderful way of doing it. And that is the greatest story that ever was written. Have you read it?"

He nodded.

"Well, then you remember how that poor fellow stole a loaf of bread to feed his sister's hungry children and how, without trying to find out about things and be just, they put him in prison. Then, because he tried to get out, they kept him there years and years. Then when they at last let him out, in spite of it all, after he had come into contact with a beautiful, unselfish old man, he became one of the most wonderful characters the world may hope to know. Just think how wonderful his earlier years, wasted in prison, might have been if someone had only tried a little to understand."

"You're good," smiled Harry. "When I get arrested I'll have you for my lawyer."

Lucile, once more quite herself, laughed heartily. Then she suddenly sobered.

"If I were you," she said in a low tone, "I shouldn't worry too much about that set of Shakespeare. Someway I have an idea that it will show up in its own good time."

Harry shot her a quick look, then as he turned to walk away, said in a tone of forced lightness:

"Oh! All right."

The following night they were free to return to the scene of the mystery, the cottage on dreary Tyler street where the old man and the strange child lived. A light shone out of the window with the torn shade as they loitered along in front of the place as before. Much to their surprise, not ten minutes had passed when the child stole forth.

"We were just in time," breathed Florence.

"Dressed just as she was on the first night I saw her," Lucile whispered as the child passed them.

"She's making for the elevated station this time," said Florence as they hurried along after her. "That means a long trip and you are tired. Why don't you let me follow her alone?"

"Why I—"

Lucile cut her speech short to grip her companion's arm.

"Florence," she whispered excitedly, "did you hear a footstep behind us?"

"Why, yes, I—"

Florence hesitated. Lucile broke in:

"There was one. I am sure of it, and just now as I looked about there was no one in sight. You don't think someone could suspect—be shadowing us?"

"Of course not."

"It might be that woman who tried to carry the child away."

"I think not. That was in another part of the city. Probably just nothing at all."

"Yes, yes, there it is now. I hear it. Look about quick."

"No one in sight," said Florence. "It's your

nerves. You'd better go home and get a good night's sleep."

They parted hurriedly at the station. Florence swung onto the train boarded by the child, a train which she knew would carry her to the north side, directly away from the university.

"Probably be morning before I get in," she grumbled to herself. "What a wild chase!"

Yet, as she stole a glance now and then at the child, who, all unconscious of her scrutiny, sat curled up in the corner of a near-by seat, she felt that, after all, she was worth the effort being made for her.

"Whosoever saveth a soul from destruction," she whispered to herself as the train rattled on over the river on its way north.

In the meantime Lucile had boarded a south-bound car. She was not a little troubled by the thought of those footsteps behind them on the sidewalk. She knew it was not her nerves.

"Someone *was* following us!" she whispered to herself. "I wonder who and why."

She puzzled over it all the way home; was

puzzling over it still when she left her car at the university.

Somewhat to her surprise she saw Harry Brock leave the same train. He appeared almost to be avoiding her but when she called to him he turned about and smiled.

"So glad to have someone to walk those five lonely blocks with," she smiled.

"Pleasure mutual," he murmured, but he seemed ill at ease.

Lucile glanced at him curiously.

"He can't think I've got a crush on him," she told herself. "Our friendship's had too much of the ordinary in it for that. I wonder what is the matter with him."

Conversation on the way to the university grounds rambled along over commonplaces. Each studiously avoided any reference to the mystery of the missing books.

Lucile was distinctly relieved as he left her at the dormitory door.

"Well," she heaved a sigh, "whatever could have come over him? He has always been so

frank and fine. I wonder if he suspects — but, no, how could he?"

As she hung her wrap in the corner of her room, her eye fell upon the papier-mache lunch box. Her hand half reached for it, then she drew it back and flung herself into a chair.

"To-morrow," she murmured. "I'm so tired."

Fifteen minutes later she was in her bed fast asleep, dreaming of her pal, and in that dream she saw her rattling on and on and on forever through the night.

CHAPTER VII

THE VANISHING PORTLAND CHART

Florence was not rattling on and on through the night as Lucile dreamed. Some two miles from the heart of the city her journey on the elevated came to a halt. The child left the car and went bounding down the steps.

Not many moments passed before Florence realized that her destination was a famous library, the Newburg. Before she knew it the massive structure of gray sandstone loomed up before her. And before she could realize what was happening, the child had darted through the door and lost herself in the labyrinth of halls, stairways and passageways which led to hundreds of rooms where books were stacked or where huge oak tables invited one to pause and read.

"She's gone!" Florence gasped. "Now how shall I find her?"

Walking with all the speed that proper conduct in such a spacious and dignified hostelry of books would allow, she passed from room to room, from floor to floor, until, footsore and weary, without the least notion of the kind of room she was in or whether she was welcome or not, she at last threw herself into a chair to rest.

"She's escaped me!" she sighed. "And I promised to keep in touch with her. What a mess! But the child's a witch. Who could be expected to keep up with her?"

"Are you interested in the exhibit?" It was the well-modulated tone of a trained librarian that interrupted her train of thought. The question startled her.

"The — er —" she stammered. "Why, yes, very much."

What the exhibit might be she had not the remotest notion.

"Ah, yes," the lady sighed. "Portland charts

are indeed interesting. Perhaps you should like to have me explain some of them to you?"

"Portland charts." That did sound interesting. It suggested travel. If there was any one thing Florence was interested in, it was travel.

"Why, yes," she said eagerly, "I would."

"The most ancient ones," said the librarian, indicating a glass case, "are here. Here you see one that was made in 1440, some time before Columbus sailed for America. These maps were made for mariners. Certain men took it up as a life work, the making of Portland charts. It is really very wonderful, when you think of it. How old they are, four or five hundred years, yet the coloring is as perfect as if they were done but yesterday."

Florence listened eagerly. This was indeed interesting.

"You see," smiled the librarian, "in those days nothing much was known of what is now the new world, but from time to time ships lost at sea drifted about to land at last on strange

shores. These they supposed were shores of islands. When they returned they related their experiences and a new island was stuck somewhere on the map. The exact location could not be discovered, so they might make a mistake of a thousand or more miles in locating them, but that didn't really matter, for no one ever went to them again."

"What a time to dream of," sighed Florence. "What an age of mysteries!"

"Yes, wasn't it? But there are mysteries quite as wonderful to-day. Only trouble is, we don't see them."

"And sometimes we do see them but can't solve them." Florence was thinking of the mystery that thus far was her property and her chum's.

"The maps were sometimes bound in thin books very much like an atlas," the librarian explained. "Here is one that is very rare." She indicated a book in a case.

The book was open at the first map with the inside of the front cover showing. Florence

was about to pass it with a glance when something in the upper outside corner of the cover caught and held her attention. It was the picture of a gargoyle with a letter L surrounding two sides of it. It was a bookmark and, though she had not seen the mark in the missing Shakespeare, she knew from Lucile's description of it that this must be an exact duplicate.

"Probably from the same library originally," she thought. "I suppose these charts are worth a great deal of money," she ventured.

"Oh! yes. A great deal. One doesn't really set a price on such things. These were the gift of a rich man. It is the finest collection except one in America."

As Florence turned to pass on, she was startled to see the mysterious child who had escaped from her sight nearly an hour before, standing not ten feet from her. She was apparently much interested in the cherubs done in blue ink on one chart and used to indicate the prevailing direction of the winds.

"Ah, now I have you!" she sighed. "There

is but one door to this room. I will watch the door, not you. When you leave the room, I will follow."

With the corner of an eye on that door, she sauntered from case to case for another quarter of an hour. Then seized with a sudden desire to examine the chart book with the gargoyle in the corner of its cover, she drifted toward it.

Scarcely could she believe her eyes as she gave the case a glance. *The chart book was gone.*

Consternation seized her. She was about to cry out when the thought suddenly came to her that the book had probably been removed by the librarian.

The next moment a suggestion that the ancient map book and the presence of the child in the room had some definite connection flashed through her mind.

Hurriedly her eye swept the room. The child was gone!

There remained now not one particle of doubt in her mind. "She took it," she whispered. "I wonder why."

Instantly her mind was in a commotion. Should she tell what she knew? At first she thought she ought, yet deliberation led to silence, for, after all, what did she know? She had not seen the child take the book. She had seen her in the room, that was all.

And now the librarian, sauntering past the case, noted the loss. The color left her face, but that was all. If anything, her actions were more deliberate than before. Gliding to a desk, she pressed a button. The next moment a man appeared. She spoke a few words. Her tone was low, her lips steady. The man sauntered by the case, glanced about the room, then walked out of the door. Not a word, not an outcry. A book worth thousands had vanished.

Yet as she left the library, Florence felt how impossible it would have been for her to have carried that book with her. She passed four eagle-eyed men before she reached the outside door and each one searched her from head to foot quite as thoroughly as an X-ray might have done.

"All the same," she breathed, as she reached the cool, damp outer air of night, "the bird has flown, your Portland chart book is gone, for the time at least.

"Question is," she told herself, "what am I going to do about it?"

CHAPTER VIII

WHAT WAS IN THE PAPIER-MACHE LUNCH BOX

"We can tell whether she really took it," said Lucile after listening to Florence's story of her strange experiences in the Portland chart room of the famous old library. "We'll go back to Tyler street and look in at the window with the torn shade. If she took it, it's sure to be in the empty space in the book-shelf. Looks like he was trying to fill that space."

"He's awfully particular about how it's filled," laughed Florence. "He might pick up enough old books in a secondhand store to fill the whole space and not spend more than a dollar."

"Isn't it strange!" mused Lucile. "He might pack a hundred thousand dollars' worth

of old books in a space two feet long, and will at the rate he's going."

"The greatest mystery after all is the gargoyle in the corner of each book they take," said Florence, wrinkling her brow. "He seems to be sort of specializing in those books. They are taken probably from a private library that has been sold and scattered."

"That is strange!" said Lucile. "The whole affair is most mysterious! And, by the way," she smiled, "I have never taken the trouble to look into that papier-mache lunch box the child lost on the street, the night we rescued her from that strange and terrible woman. There might possibly be some clue in it."

"Might," agreed Florence.

Now that the thought had occurred to them, they were eager to inspect the box. Lucile's fingers trembled as they unloosed the clasps which held it shut. And well they might have trembled, for, as it was thrown open, it revealed a small book done in a temporary binding of vellum.

Lucile gave it one glance, then with a little cry of surprise, dropped it as if it were on fire.

"Why! Why! What?" exclaimed Florence in astonishment.

"It's Frank Morrow's book, Walton's 'Compleat Angler.' The first edition. The one worth sixteen hundred dollars. And it's been right here in this room all the time!" Lucile sank into a chair and there sat staring at the strangely found book.

"Isn't that queer!" said Florence at last.

"She — she'd been to his shop. Got into the building just the way you said she would, by posing as a scrubwoman's child, and had made a safe escape when that woman for some mysterious reason grabbed her and tried to carry her off."

"Looks that way," said Florence. "And I guess that's a clear enough case against her, if our Shakespeare one isn't. You'll tell Frank Morrow and he'll have her arrested, of course."

"I — I don't know," hesitated Lucile. "I'm really no surer that that's the thing to do than

I was before. There is something so very strange about it all."

The book fell open in her hand. The inside of the front cover was exposed to view. The gargoyle in the corner stared up at her.

"It's the gargoyle!" she exclaimed. "Why always the gargoyle? And how could a child with a face like hers consciously commit a theft?"

For a time they sat silently staring at the gargoyle. At last Lucile spoke.

"I think I'll go and talk with Frank Morrow."

"Will you tell him all about it?"

"I — I don't know."

Florence looked puzzled.

"Are you going to take the book?"

Lucile hesitated. "No," she said after a moment's thought, "I think I sha'n't."

"Why — what — "

Florence paused, took one look at her roommate's face, then went about the business of gathering up material for a class lecture.

"Sometimes," she said after a moment, "I

think you are as big a riddle as the mystery you are trying to solve."

"Why?" Lucile exclaimed. "I am only trying to treat everyone fairly."

"Which can't be done," laughed Florence. "There is an old proverb which runs like this: 'To do right by all men is an art which no one knows.'"

Lucle approached the shop of Frank Morrow in a troubled state of mind. She had Frank Morrow's valuable book. She wished to play fair with him. She must, sooner or later, return it to him. Perhaps even at this moment he might have a customer for the book. Time lost might mean a sale lost, yet she did not wish to return it, not at this time. She did not wish even so much as to admit that she had the book in her possession. To do so would be to put herself in a position which required further explaining. The book had been carried away from the bookshop. Probably it had been stolen. Had she herself taken it? If not, who then? Where was the culprit? Why should not such

a person be punished? These were some of the questions she imagined Frank Morrow asking her, and, for the present, she did not wish to answer them.

At last, just as the elevator mounted toward the upper floors, she thought she saw a way out.

"Anyway, I'll try it," she told herself.

She found Frank Morrow alone in his shop. He glanced up at her from over an ancient volume he had been scanning, then rose to bid her welcome.

"Well, what will it be to-day?" he smiled. "A folio edition of Shakespeare or only the original manuscript of one of his plays?"

"Oh," she smiled back, "are there really original manuscripts of Shakespeare's plays?"

"Not that anyone has ever discovered. But, my young lady, if you chance to come across one, I'll pledge to sell it for you for a million dollars flat and not charge you a cent commission."

"Oh!" breathed Lucile, "that would be marvelous."

Then suddenly she remembered her reason for being there.

"Please may I take a chair?" she asked, her lips aquiver with some new excitement.

"By all means." Frank Morrow himself sank into a chair.

"Mr. Morrow," said Lucile, poising on the very edge of the chair while she clasped and unclasped her hands, "if I were to tell you that I know exactly where your book is, the one worth sixteen hundred dollars; the Compleat Angler, what would you say?"

Frank Morrow let a paperweight he had been toying with crash down upon the top of his desk, yet as he turned to look at her there was no emotion expressed upon his face, a whimsical smile, that was all.

"I'd say you were a fortunate girl. You probably know I offered a hundred dollar reward for its return. This morning I doubled that."

Lucile's breath came short and quick. She had completely forgotten the reward. She

would be justly entitled to it. And what wouldn't two hundred dollars mean to her? Clothes she had longed for but could not afford; leisure for more complete devotion to her studies; all this and much more could be purchased with two hundred dollars.

For a moment she wavered. What was the use? The whole proposition if put fairly to the average person, she knew, would sound absurd. To protect two persons whom you have never met nor even spoken to; to protect them when to all appearances they were committing one theft after another, with no excuse which at the moment might be discovered; how ridiculous!

Yet, even as she wavered, she saw again the face of that child, heard again the shuffling footstep of the tottering old man, thought of the gargoyle mystery; then resolved to stand her ground.

"I do know exactly where your book is," she said steadily. "But if I were to tell you that for the present I did not wish to have you ask me where it was, what would you say?"

"Why," he smiled as before, "I would say that this was a great old world, full of many mysteries that have never been solved. I should say that a mere book was nothing to stand between good friends.

He put out a hand to clasp hers. "When you wish to tell me where the book is or to see that it is returned, drop in or call me on the phone. The reward will be waiting for you."

Lucile's face was flushed as she rose to go. She wished to tell him all, yet did not dare.

"But — but you might have a customer waiting for that book," she exclaimed.

"One might," he smiled. "In such an event I should say that the customer would be obliged to continue to wait."

Lucile moved toward the door and as she did so she barely missed bumping into an immaculately tailored young man, with all too pink cheeks and a budding moustache.

"I beg your pardon," he apologized.

"It was my fault," said Lucile much confused.

The young man turned to Frank Morrow.

"Show up yet?" he asked.

"Not yet."

"Well?"

"I'll let you know if it does."

'Yes, do. I have a notion I know where there's another copy."

"Well, I'll be sorry to lose the sale, but I can't promise delivery at any known date now."

"Perhaps not at all?"

"Perhaps."

The young man bowed his way out so quickly that Lucile was still in the shop.

"That," smiled Frank Morrow, "is R. Stanley Ramsey, Jr., a son of one of our richest men. He wanted 'The Compleat Angler.'"

He turned to his work as if he had been speaking of a mere trifle.

Lucile was overwhelmed. So he did have a customer who was impatient of waiting and might seek a copy elsewhere? Why, this Frank Morrow was a real sport! She found herself wanting more than ever to tell him everything and to assure him that the book would be on

his desk in two hours' time. She considered.

But again the face of the child framed in a circle of light came before her. Again on the street at night in the clutches of a vile woman, she heard her say, "I won't steal. I'll die first."

Then with a sigh she tiptoed toward the door.

"By the way," Frank Morrow's voice startled her, "you live over at the university, don't you?"

"Yes."

"Mind doing me a favor?"

"Certainly not."

"The Silver-Barnard binderies are only two blocks from your station. You'll almost pass them. They bind books by hand; fine books, you know. I have two very valuable books which must be bound in leather. I'd hate to trust them to an ordinary messenger and I can't take them myself. Would you mind taking them along?"

"N — no," Lucile was all but overcome by this token of his confidence in her.

"Thanks."

He wrapped the two books carefully and

handed them to her, adding, as he did so:

"Ask for Mr. Silver himself and don't let anyone else have them. Perhaps," he suggested as an afterthought, "you'd like to be shown through the bindery. It's rather an interesting place."

"Indeed I should. Anything that has to do with books interests me."

He scribbled a note on a bit of paper.

"That'll let you through," he smiled, "and no thanks due. 'One good turn,' you know." He bowed her out of the room.

She found Mr. Silver to be a brisk person with a polite and obliging manner. It was with a deep sense of relief that she saw the books safely in his hands. She had seen so much of vanishing books these last few days that she feared some strange magic trick might spirit them from her before they reached their destination.

The note requesting that she be taken through the bindery she kept for another time. She must hurry back to the university now.

"It will be a real treat," she told herself. "There are few really famous binderies in our country. And this is one of them." Little she realized as she left the long, low building which housed the bindery, what part it was destined to play in the mystery she was attempting to unravel.

She returned to the university and to her studies. That night she and Florence went once more to Tyler street, to the tumble-down cottage where the two mysterious persons lived, and there the skein of mystery was thrown into a new tangle.

CHAPTER IX

SHADOWED

A cold fog hung low over the city as the two girls stole forth from the elevated station that night on their way to Tyler street. From the trestlework of the elevated there came a steady drip-drip; the streets reeked with damp and chill; the electric lamps seemed but balls of light suspended in space.

"B-r-r!" said Florence, drawing her wraps more closely about her. "What a night!"

"Sh!" whispered Lucile, dragging her into a corner. "There's someone following us again."

Scarcely had she spoken the words when a man with collar turned up and cap pulled low passed within four feet of them. He traveled with a long, swinging stride. Lucile fancied that she recognized that stride, but she could

not be sure; also, for the moment she could not remember who the person was who walked in this fashion.

"Only some man returning to his home," said Florence. "This place gets on your nerves."

"Perhaps," said Lucile.

As they reached the street before the cottage of many mysteries they were pleased to see lights streaming from the rent in the shade.

"At least we shall be able to tell whether they have the book of Portland charts," sighed Lucile as she prepared to make a dash for the shadows.

"Now," she breathed; "there's no one in sight."

Like two lead-colored drifts of fog they glided into a place by the window.

Lucile was first to look. The place seemed quite familiar to her. Indeed, at first glance she would have said that nothing was changed. The old man sat in his chair. Half in a doze, he had doubtless drifted into the sort of day-dream that old persons often indulge in. The

child, too, sat by the table. She was sewing. That she meant to go out later was proved by the fact that her coat and tam-o'-shanter lay on a near-by chair.

As I have said, Lucile's first thought was that nothing had changed. One difference, however, did not escape her. Two books had been added to the library. The narrow, unfilled space had been narrowed still further. One book was tall, too tall for the space which it was supposed to occupy, so tall that it leaned a little to the right. The other book did not appear to be an old volume. On the contrary its back was bright and shiny as if just coming from the press. It was highly ornamented with figures and a title done all in gold. These fairly flashed in the lamplight.

"That's strange!" she whispered to herself.

But even as she thought it, she realized that this was no ordinary publishers' binding.

"Leather," she told herself, "rich leather binding and I shouldn't wonder if the letters and decorations were done in pure gold."

Without knowing exactly why she did it, she made a mental note of every figure which played a part in the decorating of the back of that book.

Then suddenly remembering her companion and their problem, she touched her arm as she whispered:

"Look! Is that tall book second from the end on the shelf with the vacant space the Portland chart book?"

Florence pressed her face to the glass and peered for the first time into the room of mysteries. For a full two minutes she allowed the scene to be photographed on the sensitive plates of her brain. Then turning slowly away she whispered:

"Yes, I believe it is."

They were just thinking of seeking a place of greater safety when a footstep sounded on the pavement close at hand. Crouching low they waited the stranger's passing.

To their consternation, he did not pass but turned in at the short walk which led up to the cottage.

Crouching still lower, scarcely breathing, they waited.

The man made his way directly to the door. After apparently fumbling about for an electric button, he suddenly flashed out an electric torch.

With an inaudible gasp Florence prepared to drag her companion out of their place of danger. But to their intense relief the man flashed the light off, then gave the door a resounding knock.

That one flash of light had been sufficient to reveal to Lucile the features of his face. She recognized it instantly. In her surprise she gripped her companion's arm until she was ready to cry out with pain.

The door flew open. The man entered. The door was closed.

"Look!" whispered Lucile, pressing Florence toward the spot where the light streamed out. "Look, I know him."

She gave Florence but a half moment, then dragging her from the place of vantage pressed her own face to the glass.

"This would be abominable," she whispered,

"if it weren't for the fact that we are trying to help them — trying to find a way out."

The man, a very young man with a slight moustache, had removed his coat and hat and had taken a seat. He was talking to the old man. He did the greater part of the talking. Every now and again he would pause and the old man would shake his head.

This pantomime was kept up for some time. At last the young man rose and walked toward the bookshelves. The old man half rose in his chair as if to detain him, then settled back again.

The young man's eyes roved over the books, then came to rest suddenly in a certain spot. Then his hand went out.

The old man sprang to his feet. There were words on his lips. What they were the girls could not tell.

Smiling with the good-natured grace of one who is accustomed to have what he desires, the young man opened the book to glance at the title page. At once his face became eager. He glanced hurriedly through the book. He turned

to put a question to the old man beside him.

The old man nodded.

Instantly the young man's hand was in his pocket. The two girls shrank back in fear. But the thing he took from his pocket was a small book, apparently a check book.

Speaking, he held the check book toward the old man. The old man shook his head. This touch of drama was repeated three times. Then, with a disappointed look on his face, the young man replaced the book, turned to the chair on which his hat and coat rested, put them on, said good night to the old man, bowed to the child and was gone.

The two girls, after stretching their cramped limbs, made their way safely to the sidewalk.

"Who — who was he?" whispered Florence through chattering teeth.

"R. Stanley Ramsey."

"Not the rich Ramsey?"

"His son."

"What did he want?"

"I don't know," said Lucile, "but it may be

that we have found the man higher up, the real criminal. It may be that this rich young fellow is getting them to steal the books so he can buy them cheap."

Lucile told of the incident regarding the copy of "The Compleat Angler."

"He said he thought he knew where there was another copy. Don't you see, he may have gotten the girl to steal it. And now he comes for it and is disappointed because they haven't got it for him."

"It might be," said Florence doubtfully, "but it doesn't seem probable, does it? He must have plenty of money."

"Perhaps his father doesn't give him a large allowance. Then, again, perhaps, he thinks such things are smart. They say that some rich men's sons are that way. There's something that happened in there though that I don't understand. He —"

"Hist," whispered Florence, dragging her into a slow walk; "here comes the child."

Once more they saw the slim wisp of a girl steal out like a ghost into the night.

CHAPTER X

MYSTERIES OF THE SEA

The trail over which the mystery child led them that night revealed nothing. Indeed, she eluded them, escaping the moment she left the elevated train at a down town station.

"Nothing to do but go home," said Florence in a disappointed tone.

"Oh, well, cheer up," smiled Lucile. "We've had a new chapter added to our mystery, as well as a whole new character who promises to become interesting. But look, Florence," she whispered suddenly. "No, don't stare, just glance down toward the end of the platform. See that man?"

"The one with his collar turned up and with his back to us?"

"Yes."

"That's the man who passed us when we were on our way to the mystery cottage."

"Are you sure?"

"Can't be mistaken. Same coat, same hat, same everything."

"Why then —"

Florence checked herself. A moment later she said in a quiet tone of voice:

"Lucile, don't you think it's about time we waded ashore? Came clear and got out of this affair; turned facts over to the authorities and allowed them to take their course?"

Lucile was silent for a moment. Then suddenly she shivered all over and whispered tensely:

"No — no, not quite yet."

"We may get in over our necks."

"I can swim. Can't you?"

"I'll try," Florence laughed, and there for the time the matter ended.

Lucile worked in the library two hours the next day. One fact could not escape her attention. Harry Brock had been losing a lot of

sleep. She saw him rubbing his eyes from time to time and once he actually nodded over his records.

"Been studying late?" she asked in friendly sympathy.

He shot her a quick, penetrating glance, then, seeming to catch himself, said, "Oh, yes, quite a bit."

That afternoon, finding study difficult and being in need of a theme for a special article to be written for English 5b, she decided to use her card of admittance to the bindery and glean the material for the theme from that institution.

She could scarcely have chosen a more fitting subject, for there are few places more interesting than a famous book bindery. Unfortunately, something occurred while she was there that quite drove all the thoughts of her theme out of her head and added to her already overburdened shoulders an increased weight of responsibility.

A famous bindery is a place of many wonders. The stitching machines, the little and

great presses, the glowing fires that heat irons for the stamping, all these and many more lend an air of industry, mystery and fine endeavor to the place.

Not in the general bindery, where thousands of books are bound each day, did Lucile find her chief interest, however. It was when she had been shown into a small side room, into which the natural sunlight shone through a broad window, that she realized that she had reached the heart of the place.

"This," said the young man attending her, "is the hand bindery. Few books are bound here; sometimes not more than six a year, but they are handsomely, wonderfully bound. Mr. Kirkland, the head of this department, will tell you all about it. I hear my autophone call. I will come for you a little later."

Lucile was not sorry to be left alone in such a room. It was a place of rare enchantment. Seated at their benches, bending over their work, with their blue fires burning before them, were three skilled workmen. They were more than

workmen; they were artists. The work turned out by them rivaled in beauty and perfection the canvas of the most skilled painter. They wrought in inlaid leather and gold; the artist in crayon and oils. The artist uses palette, knife and brush; their steel tools were fashioned to suit their art.

Ranged along one side of the room was a long rack in which these tools were kept. There were hundreds of them, and each tool had its place. Every now and again from the benches there came a hot sizzling sound, which meant that one of these tools was being tested after having been heated over the flame.

Seeing her looking at the rack of tools, the head workman, a broad-shouldered man with a pleasant smile and keen blue eyes, turned toward her.

"Would you like to have me tell you a little about them?" he asked.

"Indeed I should."

"Those tools once belonged to Hans Wiemar, the most famous man ever known to the craft.

After he died I bought them from his widow. He once spent three years binding a single book. It was to be presented to the king of England. He was a very skillful artisan.

"We bind some pretty fine books here, too," he said modestly. "Here is one I am only just beginning. You see it is a very large book, a book of poetry printed in the original German. I shall be at least two months doing it.

"The last one I had was much smaller but it was to have taken me four months."

A shadow passed over his face.

"Did — did you finish it?" asked Lucile, a tone of instinctive sympathy in her voice.

"It was an ancient French book, done in the oldest French type. It was called 'Mysteries of the Sea,'" he went on without answering her question. "This was the tool we used most on it," he said, holding out the edge of a steel tool for her inspection. "You see, the metal is heated and pressed into the leather in just the right way, then gold, twenty-two carat gold, is pressed into the creases that are left

and we have a figure in gold as a result. This one you see is in the form of an ancient sailing ship."

Lucile started, then examined the tool more carefully.

"Here is another tool we used. It represents clouds. This one makes the water. You see we use appropriate tools. The book was about ships and the sea, written before the time of Columbus."

He was silent for a moment, then said slowly, a look of pain coming into his fine face, "I suppose I might as well tell you. The book was stolen, stolen from my bench during the lunch hour."

Lucile started violently.

The artist stared at her for a second, then went on.

"Of course, I can't be held responsible, yet no doubt they blame me in a way. The book was very valuable — worth thousands of dollars. And it would have been finished in two days." He bowed his head as if in silent grief.

"Please," Lucile's lips quivered with emotion as she spoke, "did the book have three of these ancient ship designs on the back of it, one large and two small?"

"Yes."

"And was it done in dark red leather with the decorations all in gold?"

"Yes, yes!" the man's tones were eager.

"And, and," Lucile whispered the words, "was there a bookmark in the upper corner of the inside of the front cover?"

"Yes, yes, yes!" He uttered the words in a tense whisper. "How can you know so much about the book?"

"Please," pleaded Lucile, "I can't tell you now. But per — perhaps I can help you."

"I will take you to our president, to Mr. Silver."

"Please — please — no — not now. Please let me go now. I must think. I will come back — truly — truly I will."

With the instinct of a born gentleman he escorted her to a side door and let her out.

The sunshine, as she emerged, seemed unreal to her. Everything seemed unreal.

"The gargoyle! The gargoyle!" she whispered hoarsely. "Can I never escape it? Can I go no place without discovering that books marked with that hated, haunting sign have been stolen? That book, the hand-bound copy of 'Mysteries of the Sea,' is the latest acquirement of the old man in the mystery cottage on Tyler street. She stole it; the child stole it. And why? Why? It seems that I should tell all that I know," she whispered to herself, "that it is my duty. Surely the thing can't go on." She bathed her flushed cheeks in the outer air.

"And yet," she thought more calmly, "there are the old man, the child. There *is* something back of it all. The gargoyle's secret. Oh! if only one knew!"

CHAPTER XI

LUCILE SHARES HER SECRET

As Lucile returned to her room it seemed to her that she was being hedged about on all sides by friends who had a right to demand that she reveal the secret hiding-place of the stolen books. The university which had done so much for her, Frank Morrow, her father's friend, the great scientific library which was a friend to all, and now this splendid artist who worked in leather and gold; they all appeared to be reaching out their hands to her.

In her room for two hours she paced the floor. Then she came to a decision.

"I'll tell one of them; tell the whole story and leave it to him. Who shall it be?"

The answer came to her instantly: Frank Morrow.

"Yes, he's the one," she whispered. "He's

the most human of them all. White-haired as he is, I believe he can understand the heart of a child and — and of a girl like me."

She found him busy with some customers. When he had completed the sale and the customers had gone, she drew her chair close to his and told him the story frankly from beginning to end. The only thing she left out was the fact that she held suspicions against the young millionaire's son.

"If there's ground for suspicion, he'll discover it," she told herself.

Frank Morrow listened attentively. At times he leaned forward with the light on his face that one sometimes sees upon the face of a boy who is hearing a good story of pirates and the sea.

"Well," he dampened his lips as she finished, "well!"

For some time after that there was silence in the room, a silence so profound that the ticking of Frank Morrow's watch sounded loud as a grandfather's clock.

At last Frank Morrow wheeled about in his chair and spoke.

"You know, Miss Lucile," he said slowly, "I am no longer a child, except in spirit. I have read a great deal. I have thought a great deal, sitting alone in this chair, both by day and by night. Very often I have thought of us, of the whole human race, of our relation to the world, to the being who created us and to one another.

"I have come to think of life like this," he said, his eyes kindling. "It may seem a rather gloomy philosophy of life, but when you think of it, it's a mighty friendly one. I think of the whole human race as being on a huge raft in mid-ocean. There's food and water enough for everyone if all of us are saving, careful and kind. Not one of us knows how we came on the raft. No one knows whither we are bound. From time to time we hear the distant waves break on some shore, but what shore we cannot tell. The earth, of course, is our raft and the rest of the universe our sea.

"What's the answer to all this? Just this much: Since we are so situated, the greatest, best thing, the thing that will bring us the greatest amount of real happiness, is to be kind to all, especially those weaker than ourselves, just as we would if we were adrift on a raft in the Atlantic.

"Without all this philosophy, you have caught the spirit of the thing. I can't advise you. I can only offer to assist you in any way you may suggest. It's a strange case. The old man is doubtless a crank. Many book collectors are. It may be, however, that there is some stronger hand back of it all. The girl appears to be the old man's devoted slave and is too young truly to understand right from wrong. I should say, however, that she is clever far beyond her years."

Lucile left the shop strengthened and encouraged. She had not found a solution to her problem but had been told by one much older and wiser than she that she was not going at the affair in the wrong way. She had received his

assurance of his assistance at any time when it seemed needed.

That night a strange thing happened. Lucile had learned by repeated experience that very often the solution of life's perplexing problems comes to us when we are farthest from them and engaged in work or pursuit of pleasure which is most remote from them. Someone had given her a ticket to the opera. Being a lover of music, she had decided to abandon her work and the pursuit of the all-absorbing mystery, to forget herself listening to outbursts of enchanting song.

The outcome had been all that she might hope for. Lost in the great swells of music which came to her from hundreds of voices or enchanted by the range and beauty of a single voice, she forgot all until the last curtain had been called and the crowd thronged out.

There was a flush on her cheek and new light in her eyes as she felt the cool outer air of the street.

She had walked two blocks to her station and

was about to mount the stairs when, to her utter astonishment, she saw the mystery child dart across the street. Almost by instinct she went in full pursuit.

The child, all oblivious of her presence, after crossing the street, darted down an alley and, after crossing two blocks, entered one of those dark and dingy streets which so often flank the best and busiest avenues of a city.

At the third door to the left, a sort of half basement entrance that one reached by descending a short stairs, the child paused and fumbled at the doorknob. Lucile was just in time to get a view of the interior as the door flew open. The next instant she sprang back into the shadows.

She gripped at her wildly beating heart and steadied herself against the wall as she murmured, "It couldn't be! Surely! Surely it could not be."

And yet she was convinced that her eyes had not deceived her. The person who had opened the door was none other than the woman

who had treated the child so shamefully and had dragged her along the street. And now the child had come to the door of the den which this woman called home and of her own free will had entered the place and shut the door. What could be the meaning of all this.

Some mysteries are long in solving. Some are apparently never solved. Some scarcely become mysteries before their solution appears. This mystery was of the latter sort.

Plucking up all the courage she could command, Lucile made her way down the steps and, crowding herself through a narrow opening, succeeded in reaching a position by a window. Here she could see without being seen and could catch fragments of the conversation which went on within.

The child had advanced to the center of the room. The woman and a man, worse in appearance, more degraded than the woman, stood staring at her. There was something heroic about the tense, erect bearing of the child.

"Like Joan of Arc," Lucile thought.

The child was speaking. The few words that Lucile caught sent thrills into her very soul.

The child was telling the woman that she had had a book, which belonged to her friend, Monsieur Le Bon. This book was very old and much prized by him. She had had it with her that other night in a lunch box. The woman had taken it. She had come for it. It must be given back.

As the child finished, the woman burst into a hoarse laugh. Then she launched forth in a tirade of abusive language. She did not admit having the book nor yet deny it. She was too intent upon abusing the child and the old man who had befriended her for that.

At last she sprang at the child. The child darted for the door, but the man had locked and bolted it. There followed a scramble about the room which resulted in the upsetting of chairs and the knocking of kitchen utensils from the wall. At last the child, now fighting and sobbing, was roped to the high post of an ancient bedstead.

Then, to Lucile's horror, she saw the man thrust a heavy iron poker through the grate of the stove in which a fire burned brightly.

Her blood ran cold. Chills raced up her spine. What was the man's purpose? Certainly nothing good. Whatever these people were to the child, whatever the child might be, the thing must be stopped. The child had at least done one heroic deed; she had come back for that book, the book which at this moment rested in Lucile's own room, Frank Morrow's book. She had come for it knowing what she must face and had come not through fear but through love for her patriarchal friend, Monsieur Le Bon. Somehow she must be saved.

With a courage born of despair, Lucile made her way from the position by the window toward the door. As she did so, she thought she caught a movement on the street above her. She was sure that a second later she heard the sound of lightly running footsteps. Had she been watched from above? What was to come of that? There was no time to form an

answer. One hand was on the knob. With the other she beat the door. The door swung open. She stepped inside. It seemed to her that the door shut itself behind her. For a second her heart stood still as she realized that the man was behind her; that the door was bolted.

CHAPTER XII

THE TRIAL BY FIRE

The moment Lucile heard the lock click behind her she knew that she was trapped. But her fighting blood was up. Even had the door been wide open she would not have retreated.

"You release that child," she said through cold, set lips.

"Yes, you tell me 'release the child,'" said the woman, with an attempt at sarcasm; "you who are so brave, who have a companion who is like an ox, who like to beat up poor women on the street. You say, 'release the child.' You say that. And the child, she is my own stepdaughter.

"I--I don't believe it," said Lucile stoutly.

"It is true."

"If it is true, you have no right to abuse her —you are not fit to be any child's mother."

"Not fit," the woman's face became purple with rage. "I am no good, she says; not fit!" She advanced threateningly toward Lucile.

"Now, now," she stormed, "we have you where we want you. Now we shall show you whether or not we can do as we please with the child that was so very kindly given to us." She made a move toward the stove, from which the handle to the heavy poker protruded. By this time the end must be red hot.

"It's no use to threaten me," said Lucile calmly. "I wouldn't leave the room if I might. If I did it would be to bring an officer. I mean to see that the child is treated as a human being and not as a dog."

The woman's face once more became purple. She seemed petrified, quite unable to move, from sheer rage.

But the man, a sallow-complexioned person with a perpetual leer in one corner of his mouth, started for the stove.

With a quick spring Lucile reached the handle of the poker first. Seizing it, she drew it,

white hot, from the fire. The man sprang back in fear. The woman gripped the rounds of a heavy chair and made as if to lift it for a blow.

Scarcely realizing that she was imitating her hero of fiction, she brought the glowing iron close to the white and tender flesh of her forearm.

"You think you can frighten me," she smiled. "You think you can do something to me which will cause me to cease to attempt to protect that child. Perhaps you would torture me. I will prove to you that you cannot frighten me. What I have been doing is right. The world was made for people to live in who do right. If one may not always do right, then life is not worth living."

The fiery weapon came closer to her arm. The woman stared at her as if fascinated. The child, who had been silently struggling at her bands, paused in open-mouthed astonishment. For once the leer on the man's lips vanished.

Then, of a sudden, as she appeared to catch

the meaning of it all, the child gave forth a piercing scream.

The next instant there came a loud pounding at the door as a gruff voice thundered:

"Here, you in there! Open up!"

The woman dropped upon the ill-kept bed in a real or pretended swoon. Lucile allowed the poker to drop to her side. With trembling fingers the man unloosed the door and the next instant they were looking into the faces of a police sergeant and two other officers of the law.

"What's going on here?" demanded the sergeant.

Suddenly recovering from her swoon, the woman sprang to her feet.

"That young lady," she pointed an accusing finger at Lucile, "is attempting to break up our home."

The officer looked them over one by one.

"What's the girl tied up for?" he demanded.

"It's the only way we can keep her home," said the woman. "That young lady's been en-

ticing her away; her and an old wretch of a man."

"Your daughter?"

"My adopted daughter."

"What about it, little one?" the officer stepped over, and cutting the girl's bands, placed a hand on the child's head. "Is what she says true?"

"I — I don't know," she faltered. Her knees trembled so she could scarcely stand. "I never saw the young lady until now but I — I think she is wonderful."

"Is this woman your stepmother."

The girl hung her head.

"Do you wish to stay with her?"

"Oh! Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu! No! No! No! Oh, Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu!"

The child in her agony of fright and grief threw herself face down upon the bed.

The officer, seating himself beside her, smoothed her hair with his huge right hand until she was quiet, then bit by bit got from her the story of her experiences in this great

American city. Lucile listened eagerly as the little girl talked falteringly.

A Belgian refugee, she had been brought to the United States during the war, and because this unprincipled pair spoke French, which she too understood, the good-hearted but misguided people who had her in charge had given her over to them without fully looking up their record.

Because she was small and had an appealing face, and because she was a refugee, they had set her to begging on the street and had more than once asked her to steal.

Having been brought up by conscientious parents, all this was repulsive to her. So one day she had run away. She had wandered the streets of the great, unfriendly city until, almost at the point of starvation, she had been taken home by a very old man, a Frenchman.

"French," she said, "but not like these," she pointed a finger of scorn at the man and woman. "A French gentleman. A very, very wonderful man."

She had lived with him and had helped him all she could. Then, one night, as she was on an errand for him, the woman, her stepmother, had found her. She had been seized and dragged along the street. But by some strange chance she did not at all understand, she had been rescued.

That night she had been carrying a book. The book belonged to her aged benefactor and was much prized by him. Thinking that her foster mother had the book, she had dared return to ask for it.

She proceeded to relate what had happened in that room and ended with a plea that she might be allowed to return to the cottage on Tyler street.

"Are you interested in this child?" the officer asked Lucile.

"I surely am."

"Want to see that she gets safely home?"

"I — I will."

"And see here," the officer turned a stern face on the others, "if you interfere with this

child in the future, we've got enough on you to put you away. You ain't fit to be no child's parents. Far as I can tell, this here old man is. This case, for the present, is settled out of court. See!"

He motioned to his subordinates. They stood at attention until Lucile and the child passed out, then followed.

The sergeant saw the girl and the child safely on the elevated platform, then, tipping his hat, mumbled:

"Good luck and thank y' miss. I've got two of 'em myself. An' if anything ever happened to me, I'd like nothin' better'n to have you take an interest in 'em."

Something rose up in Lucile's throat and choked her. She could only nod her thanks. The next instant they went rattling away, bound for the mystery cottage on Tyler street.

For once Lucile felt richly repaid for all the doubt, perplexity and sleepless hours she had gone through.

"It's all very strange and mysterious," she

told herself, "but somehow, sometime, it will all come out right."

As she sat there absorbed in her own thoughts, she suddenly became conscious of the fact that the child at her side was silently weeping.

"Why!" she exclaimed, "what are you crying for? You are going back to your cottage and to your kind old man."

"The book," whispered the child; "it is gone. I can never return it."

A sudden impulse seized Lucile, an impulse she could scarcely resist. She wanted to take the child in her arms and say:

"Dear little girl, I have the book in my room. I will bring it to you to-morrow."

She did not say it. She could not. As far as she knew, the old man had no right to the book; it belonged to Frank Morrow.

What she did say was, "I shouldn't worry any more about it if I were you. I am sure it will come out all right in the end."

Then, before they knew it, they were off the elevated train and walking toward Tyler street and Lucile was saying to herself, "I wonder what next." Hand-in-hand the two made their way to the door of the dingy old cottage.

CHAPTER XIII

IN THE MYSTERY ROOM AT NIGHT

Much to her surprise, just when she had expected to be trudging back to the station alone, Lucile found herself seated by a table in the mystery room. She was sipping a delicious cup of hot chocolate and talking to the mystery child and her mysterious godfather. Every now and again she paused to catch her breath. It was hard for her to realize that she was in the mystery room of the mysterious cottage on Tyler street. Yet there she certainly was. The child had invited her in.

A dim, strangely tinted light cast dark shadows over everything. The strange furniture took on grotesque forms. The titles of the books along the wall gleamed out in a strange manner.

For a full five minutes the child talked to

the old man in French. He exclaimed now and then, but other than that took no part in the conversation.

When she had finished, he held out a thin, bony hand to Lucile and said in perfect English:

"Accept my thanks for what you have done to protect this poor little one, my pretty Marie. You are a brave girl and should have a reward. But, alas, I have little to give save my books and they are an inheritance, an inheritance thrice removed. They were my great-grandfather's and have descended direct to me. One is loath to part with such treasure."

"There is no need for any reward," said Lucile quickly. "I did it because I was interested in the child. But," with a sudden inspiration, "if you wish to do me a favor, tell me the story of your life."

The man gave her a quick look.

"You are so — so old," she hastened to add, "and so venerable, so soldier-like, so like General Joffre. Your life must have been a wonderful one."

"Ah, yes," the old man settled back in his chair. As if to brush a mist from before his eyes, he made a waving motion with his hand. "Ah, yes, it has been quite wonderful, that is, I may say it once was.

"I was born near a little town named Gondrecourt in the province of Meuse in France. There was a small chateau, very neat and beautiful, with a garden behind it, with a bit of woods and broad acres for cattle and grain. All that was my father's. It afterwards became mine.

"In one room of the chateau were many, many ancient volumes, some in French, some in English, for my father was a scholar, as also he educated me to be.

"These books were the cream of many generations, some dating back before the time of Columbus."

Lucile, thinking of the book of ancient Portland charts, allowed her gaze for a second to stray to the shelf where it reposed.

Again the man threw her a questioning look,

but once more went on with his narrative of his life in far-off France.

"Of all the treasures of field, garden, woods or chateau, the ones most prized by me were those ancient books. So, year after year I guarded them well, guarded them until an old man, in possession of all that was once my father's, I used to sit of an evening looking off at the fading hills at eventide with one of those books in my lap.

"Then came the war." Again his hand went up to dispel the imaginary mist. "The war took my two sons. They never came back. It took my three grandsons. We gave gladly, for was it not our beloved France that was in danger? They, too, never returned."

The old man's hand trembled as he brushed away the imaginary mist.

"I borrowed money to give to France. I mortgaged my land, my cattle, my chateau; only my treasure of books I gave no man a chance to take. They must be mine until I died. They of all the treasures I must keep.

"One night," his voice grew husky, "one night there came a terrible explosion. The earth rocked. Stones of the castle fell all about the yard. The chateau was in ruins. It was a bomb from an airplane.

"Someway the library was not touched. It alone was safe. How thankful I was that it was so. It was now all that was left.

"I took my library to a small lodging in the village. Then, when the war was ended, I packed all my books in strong boxes and started for Paris."

He paused. His head sank upon his breast. His lips quivered. It was as if he were enduring over again some great sorrow.

"Perhaps," he said after a long time, "one is foolish to grieve over what some would say is a trifle compared to other losses. But one comes to love books. They are his very dear friends. With them he shares his great pleasures. In times of sorrow they console him. Ah, yes, how wonderful they are, these books?" His eyes turned toward the shelves.

Then, suddenly, his voice changed. He hastened on. He seemed to desire to have done with it. One might have believed that there was something he was keeping back which he was afraid his lips might speak.

"I came to America," he said hoarsely, "and here I am in your great city, alone save for this blessed child, and — and my books — some of my books — most of my books."

Again he was silent. The room fell into such a silence that the very breathing of the old man sounded out like the exhaust of an engine. Somewhere in another room a clock ticked. It was ghostly.

Shaking herself free from the spell of it, Lucile said, "I — I think I must go."

"No! No!" cried the old man. "Not until you have seen some of my treasures, my books."

Leading her to the shelves, he took down volume after volume. He placed them in her hands with all the care of a salesman displaying rare and fragile china.

She looked at the outside of some; then made

bold to open the covers and peep within. They were all beyond doubt very old and valuable. But one fact stood out in her mind as she finally bade them good night, stood out as if embossed upon her very soul: In the inside upper corner of the cover of every volume, done on expensive, age-browned paper, there was the same gargoyle, the same letter L as had been in the other mysterious volumes.

"The gargoyle's secret," she whispered as she came out upon the dark, damp streets. "The gargoyle's secret. I wonder what it is!"

Then she started as if in fear that the gargoyle were behind her, about to spring at her from the dark.

CHAPTER XIV

A STRANGE REQUEST

"But, Lucile!" exclaimed Florence in an excited whisper, springing up in her bed after she had heard Lucile's story. "How did the police know that something was going wrong in that house? How did they come to be right there when you needed them most?"

"That's just what I asked the sergeant," answered Lucile, "and he just shrugged his shoulders and said, 'Somebody tipped it off.'"

"Which meant, I suppose, that someone reported the fact to police headquarters that something was wrong in that house."

"I suppose so."

"Is that all you know about it?"

"Why, I — I thought I heard someone hurrying away on the sidewalk just as I was going to enter."

"You don't suppose — "

"Oh, I don't know what to suppose," Lucile gave a short, hysterical laugh. "It is getting to be much too complicated for me. I can't stand it much longer. Something's going to burst. I think all the time that someone is dogging my tracks. I think someone must suspect me of being in league with this old man and the child."

"But if they did, why should they call the police for your protection?"

"Yes, why? Why? A whole lot of whys. And who would suspect me? I would trust Frank Morrow to keep faith with me. I am sure he trusts me fully. The Portland chart book affair I was not in at all. The bindery would scarcely suspect me. There's only our own library left. You don't think — "

"One scarcely knows what to think," said Florence wearily. "We sometimes forget that we are but two poor girls who are more or less dependent on the university for our support while we secure an education. Perhaps you

should have confided in the library authorities in the beginning."

"Perhaps. But it's too late now. I must see the thing through."

"You don't believe the old Frenchman's story."

"I don't know. It's hard to doubt it. He seems so sincere. There's something left out, I suppose."

"Of course there is. In order to keep from starving, he was obliged to sell some of his books. Then, being heartbroken over the loss of them, he has induced the child to steal them back for him. That seems sensible enough, doesn't it? Of course it's a pity that he should have been forced to sell them, but they were, in a way, a luxury. We all are obliged to give up some luxuries. For my part, I don't see how you are going to keep him out of jail. The child will probably come clear because of her age, but there's not a chance in a million of saving him. There's got to be a show-down sometime. Why not now? The facts we have

in our possession are the rightful property of others, of our library, Frank Morrow, the scientific library, of the Silver-Barnard bindery. Why not pass them on?"

Florence was sitting bolt upright in bed. She pointed her finger at her roommate by way of emphasis.

But, tired and perplexed as she was, Lucile never flinched.

"Your logic is all right save for two things," she smiled wearily.

"What two?"

"The character of the old man and the character of the child. They could not do the thing you suggest. No, not for far greater reward. Not in a thousand years." She beat the bed with her hands. "There must be some other explanation. There must. There must!"

For a moment there was silence in the room. Lucile removed her street garments, put on her dream robe, then crept into bed.

"Oh," she sighed, "I forgot to tell you. what that extraordinary child asked me to do."

"What?"

"She said she had an errand to do for the old Frenchman; that it would take her a long way from home and she was afraid to go alone. She asked me if I would go with her."

"What did you tell her?"

"I — I told her that both my roommate and I would go."

"You did!"

"Why, yes."

"Well," said Florence, after a moment's thought, "I'll go, but if it's another frightful robbery, if she's going to break in somewhere and carry away some book worth thousands of dollars, I'm not in on it. I — I'll drag her to the nearest police station and our fine little mystery will end right there."

"Oh, I don't think it can be anything like that," said Lucile sleepily. "Anyway, we can only wait and see."

With that she turned her right cheek over on the pillow and was instantly fast asleep.

CHAPTER XV

A STRANGE JOURNEY

The hours of the following day dragged as if on leaden wings. With nerves worn to single strands, Lucile was now literally living on excitement. The fact that she was to go with the mystery child on a night's trip which held promise of excitement and possible adventure in it, went far toward keeping her eyes open and on their task, but for all this, the hours dragged.

At the library she was startled to note the worn and haggard look on Harry Brock's face. She wanted to ask him the cause of it and to offer sympathy, but he appeared to actually avoid her. Whenever she found some excuse to move in his direction, he at once found one for moving away to another corner of the library.

"Whatever can be the matter with him?" she asked herself. "I wonder if I could have

offended him in any way. I should hate to lose his friendship."

Night came at last and with it the elevated station and Tyler street.

With her usual promptness, the child led them to a surface car. They rode across the city. From the car they hurried to an inter-urban depot of a steam line.

"So it's to be out of the city," Florence whispered to Lucile. "I hadn't counted on that. It may be more than we bargained for."

"I hope not," shivered Lucile. "I've been all warmed up over this trip the whole day through and now when we are actually on the way I feel cold as a clam and sort of creepy all over. Do — do you suppose it will be anything very dreadful?"

"Why, no!" laughed Florence. "Far as feelings go mine have been just the opposite to yours. I didn't want to go and felt that way all day, but now it would take all the conductors in the service to put me off the train."

With all the seriousness of a grown-up, the

child purchased tickets for them all, and now gave them to the conductor without so much as suggesting their destination to the girls.

"I don't know where I'm going but I'm on my way," whispered Florence with a smile.

"Seems strange, doesn't it?" said Lucile.

"Sh," warned Florence.

The child had turned a smiling face toward them.

"I think it's awfully good of you to come," she beamed. "It's a long way and I'm afraid we'll be late getting home, but you won't have to do anything, not really, just go along with me. It's a dreadfully lonesome place. There's a long road you have to go over and the road crosses a river and there is woods on both sides of the river. Woods are awful sort of spooky at night, don't you think so?"

Florence smiled and nodded. Lucile shivered.

"I don't mind the city," the child went on, "not any of it. There are always people everywhere and things can't be spooky there, but right out on the roads and in the woods and on

beaches where the water goes wash-wash-wash at night, I don't like that, do you?"

"Sometimes I do," said Florence. "I think I'm going to like it a lot to-night."

"Oh, are you?" exclaimed the child. "Then I'm glad, because it was awfully nice of you to come."

"A long road, woods and a river," Florence repeated in Lucile's ear. "Wherever can we be going? I supposed we would get off at one of the near-in suburbs."

"Evidently," said Lucile, forcing a smile, "we are in for a night of it. I'm going to catch forty winks. Call me when we get to the road that crosses the river in the woods." She bent her head down upon one hand and was soon fast asleep.

She was awakened by a shake from Florence. "We're here. Come on, get off."

What they saw on alighting was not reassuring. A small red depot, a narrow, irregular platform, a square of light through which they saw a young man with a green shade over his

eyes bending before a table filled with telegraph instruments; this was all they saw. Beyond these, like the entrance to some huge, magical cave, the darkness loomed at them.

The child appeared to know the way, even in the dark, for she pulled at Florence's sleeve as she whispered:

"This way please. Keep close to me."

There was not the least danger of the girls' failing to keep close, for, once they had passed beyond sight of that friendly square of light and the green-shaded figure, they were hopelessly lost.

True, the darkness shaded off a trifle as their eyes became more accustomed to it; they could tell that they were going down a badly kept, sandy road; they could see the dim outline of trees on either side; but that was all. The trees seemed a wall which shut them in on either side.

"Trees *are* spooky at night," Lucile whispered as she gripped her companion's arm a little more tightly.

"Where are we?" Florence whispered.

"I couldn't guess."

"Pretty far out. I counted five stops after the lights of the city disappeared.

"Listen."

"What is it?"

"Water rushing along somewhere."

"Might be the river. She said there was one."

"Rivers rush like that in the mountains but not here. Must be the lake shore."

"Hist—"

The child was whispering back at them. "We are coming to the bridge. It's a very long bridge, and spooky. I think we better tiptoe across it, but we mustn't run. The gallopin' goblins'll come after us if we do; besides, there's an old rusty sign on the bridge that says, 'No trotting across the bridge.'"

The next moment they felt a plank surface beneath their feet and knew they were on the bridge. It must have been a very ancient bridge. This road had never been remodelled

to fit the need of automobiles. The planks rattled and creaked in an ominous manner in spite of their tiptoeing.

"I wonder how much more there is of it," Florence groaned in a whisper when they had gone on tiptoes for what seemed an endless space of time. "If my toes don't break, I'm sure my shoes will."

As for Lucile, she was thinking her own thoughts. She was telling herself that if it were not for the fact that this night's performance gave promise of being a link in the chain of circumstances which were to be used in dragging the gargoyle's secret from its lair, she would demand that the child turn about and lead them straight back to the city.

Since she had faith that somehow the mystery was to be solved and her many worries and perplexities brought to an end, she tiptoed doggedly on. And it was well that she did, for the events of this one night were destined to bring about strange and astounding revelations. She was not to see the light of day again

before the gargoyle's secret would be fully revealed, but had she known the series of thrilling events which would lead up to that triumphant hour, she would have shrunk back and whispered, "No, no, I can't go all that way."

Often and often we find this true in life; we face seemingly unbearable situations — something is to happen to us, we are to go somewhere, be something different, do some seemingly undoable thing and we say, "We cannot endure it," yet we pass through it as through a fog to come out smiling on the other side. We are better, happier and stronger for the experience. It was to be so with Lucile.

The bridge was crossed at last. More dark and silent woods came to flank their path. Then out of the distance there loomed great bulks of darker masses

"Mountains, I'd say they were," whispered Lucile, "if it weren't for the fact that I know there are none within five hundred miles."

For a time they trudged along in silence. Then suddenly Florence whispered:

"Oh, I know! Dunes! Sand dunes! Now I know where we are. We are near the lake shore. I was out here somewhere for a week last summer. By day it's wonderful; regular mountains of sand that has been washed up and blown up from the bed of the lake. Some of them are hundreds of feet above the level of the lake. There are trees growing on them and everything."

"But what are we doing out here?"

"I can't guess. There is a wonderful beach everywhere and cottages here and there."

"But it's too late for summer cottages. They must all be closed."

"Yes, of course they must."

Again they trudged on in silence. Now they left the road to strike away across the soft, yielding surface of the sand. They sank in to their ankles. Some of the sand got into their shoes and hurt their feet, but still they trudged on.

The rush of waters on the shore grew louder.

"I love it," Florence whispered. "I like

sleeping where I can hear the rush of water. I've slept beside the Arctic Ocean, the Behring Sea and the Pacific. I've slept by the shore of this old lake. Once in the Rocky Mountains I climbed to the timber-line and there slept for five nights in a tent where all night long you could hear the rush of icy water over rocks which were more like a stony stairway than the bed of a stream. It was grand.

"When I am sleeping where I can hear the rush of water I sometimes half awaken at night and imagine I am once more on the shore of the Arctic or in a tent at the timber-line of the Rockies."

While she was whispering this they felt the sand suddenly harden beneath their feet and knew that they had reached the beach.

"You know," the child whispered suddenly and mysteriously back at them, "I don't like beaches at night. I lived by one when I was a very little girl. There was a very, very old woman lived there too. She told me many terrible stories of the sea. And do you know, once

she told me something that has made me afraid to be by the shore at night. It makes it spooky."

She suddenly seized Lucile's arm with a grip that hurt while she whispered, "That's why I wanted you to come.

"She told me," she went on, "that old woman told me," Lucile fancied she could see the child's frightened eyes gleaming out of the night, "about the men who were lost at sea; brave seamen who go on ships and brave soldiers too. Their bodies get washed all about on the bottom of the water; the fishes eat them and by and by they are all gone. But their souls can't be eaten. No sir, no one can eat them. The old woman told me that."

The child paused. Her breath was coming quick. Her grip tightened on Lucile's arm as she whispered:

"And sometimes I'm afraid one of their souls will get washed right up on the sand at night. That's what frightens me so. What do you think it would look like? What do you? Would it be all yellow and fiery like a glowworm or

would it be just white, like a sheet?"

"Florence," whispered Lucile, with a shiver, "tell her to be quiet. She'll drive me mad."

But there was no need. There is much courage to be gained by telling our secret fears to others. The child had apparently relieved her soul of a great burden, for she tramped on once more in silence.

Several moments had passed when she suddenly paused before some dark object which stood out above the sand.

"A boat," whispered Lucile.

"If you'll just help me," said the child, "we can push it into the water."

"What for?" Florence asked.

"Why, to go in, of course. It's the only way."

For a moment the two girls stood there undecided. Then Florence whispered:

"Oh, come on. It's not rough. Might as well see it through."

CHAPTER XVI

NIGHT VISITORS

A moment later they were listening to the creak of rusty oarlocks and the almost inaudible dip-dip of the oars as the child herself sent the boat out from the beach to bring it half about and skirt the shore.

The boat was some sixteen feet long. A clinker-built craft, it was light and buoyant, but for all that, with three persons aboard, the rowing of it was a tax on the strength of the child's slender arms. To add to her troubles, the water began to rubber up a bit. Small waves came slap-slapping the boat's side. Once a bit of spray broke in Florence's face.

"Here," she whispered, "it's too heavy for you. Let me have the oars, then you tell me which way to go."

"Straight ahead, only not too close in. There's a wall."

"A wall?" Lucile thought to herself. "Sounds like a prison. There's a parole camp out here somewhere. It can't be!" she shuddered. "No, of course not. What would that old man and child have to do with prisons?"

Then, suddenly an ugly thought forced its way into her mind. Perhaps after all these two were members of a gang of robbers. Perhaps a member of the gang had been in prison and was at this moment in the parole camp. What if this turned out to be a jail-breaking expedition?

"No, no!" she whispered as she shook herself to free her mind of the thought.

"There's the wall," whispered Florence, as a gray bulk loomed up to the right of them.

They passed it in silence. To Lucile they seemed like marines running a blockade in time of war.

But Florence was busy with other thoughts. That wall seemed vaguely familiar to her. It

was as if she had seen it in a dream, yet could not recall the details of the dream.

A storm was brewing off in the west. Now and then a distant flash of lightning lighted up the surrounding waters. Of a sudden one of these, more brilliant than the rest, lighted up the shore, which, at a word from the child, they were now nearing. What Florence saw was a small, artificially dredged buoy with a dock and large boathouse at the back.

Instantly what had been a dream became a reality. She had seen that wall and the little buoy and boathouse as well. Only the summer before she had spent two nights and a day with a party on the dunes. They had hired a motor boat and had skirted the shore. This place had been pointed out to her and described as the most elaborate and beautiful summer cottage on the shore.

"Why," she whispered, with a sigh of relief, "this is the summer cottage of your friend, R. Stanley Ramsey, Jr., the young man you saw at Frank Morrow's place and whom we

saw later at the mystery cottage. This isn't any brigandish thieving expedition. It is merely a business trip. Probably the old man has sold him one of his books."

Lucile's first reaction to this news was intense relief. This was not a jail-breaking expedition; in fact, was not to be in any way an adventure. But the next instant doubt came.

"What would that young man be doing in a summer cottage at this time of year?" she demanded. "All the cottages must have been closed for nearly a month. Society flies back to the city in September. Besides, if it's plain business, why all this slipping in at the lake front instead of passing through the gate?"

Florence was silent at that. She had no answer.

"Does seem strange," she mused. "There's a very high fence all about the place, but of course there must be a gate."

The next instant the boat grated on the sandy beach and they were all climbing out.

Lucile shivered as she caught sight of a large,

low, rambling building which lay well up from the shore.

"What next?" she whispered to herself.

The storm was still rumbling in the west. The sky to the east was clear. Out from the black waters of the lake the moon was rolling. Its light suddenly brightened up the shore. The girls stared about them.

Up from the beach a little way was an affair which resembled an Indian tepee. It was built of boards and covered with birch bark. Its white sides glimmered in the moonlight. Through the shadows of trees and shrubbery they made out a rustic pavilion and beyond that the cottage which was built in rustic fashion as befits a summer residence of a millionaire, although little short of a mansion.

"Wouldn't you like to see the inside of it?" breathed Florence. "I've always wondered what such a place was like."

"Yes," whispered Lucile, "but I'd prefer daylight."

They had been following the child. She had

led them as far as a rustic arbor. Built of cedar poles with the bark left on, this presented itself as an inviting place to rest.

"You stay here," the child whispered. "I'll come back."

She vanished into the shadows.

"Well!" whispered Lucile.

"What do you make of it?" Florence asked.

"Nothing yet."

"Is someone here to meet her or is she entering the place to get something?"

"Don't know. I—"

Lucile stopped short. "Did you see that?" she whispered tensely as she gripped her companion's arm.

"What?"

"There was a flash of light in the right wing of the building, like the flicker of a match."

"She can't have reached there yet."

"No."

"Do you think we should warn her? I can't help thinking she's going to break into the place."

"If she is, she should be caught. If we think she is, perhaps we should notify the police."

"The police? In such a place? You forget that we are many miles from the city and two or three miles from even a railroad station. Guess we'll have to see it through."

"Let's do it then?"

The two girls rose and began making their way stealthily in the direction the child had taken.

Now and again they paused to listen. Once they heard a sound like the creaking of a door. Lucile caught a second flash of light.

They paused behind two pine trees not ten feet from the side entrance.

The wind rustled in the pine trees. The water broke ceaselessly on the shore. Otherwise all was silence.

"Creepy," whispered Lucile.

"Ghostly," Florence shivered.

"I believe that door's ajar."

"It is."

"Let's creep up close."

The next moment found them flattened against the wall beside the door.

This door stood half open. Suddenly they caught a flash of light. Leaning far over to peer within, they saw the child bent over before a huge bookcase. The room, half illumined by her flashlight, was a large lounging room. The trimmings were rustic and massive. Beamed ceiling and heavy beams along the walls were flanked by a huge fireplace at the back. The furniture was in keeping, massive mission oak with leather cushions on chairs.

"What a wonderful place!" Florence whispered. "What wouldn't one give to have it for a study?"

The child had taken three books from the shelves. All these she replaced. She was examining the fourth when Lucile whispered, "That's the one she has come for."

"Why?"

"The light fell full upon the inside of the cover. I saw the gargoyle there."

The prediction proved a true one, for, after carefully closing the case, the child switched off the light.

Scarcely realizing what they were doing, the girls lingered by the door. Then suddenly Lucile realized their position. "She'll be here in a second," she whispered.

They turned, but not quickly enough, for of a sudden a glare of light from a powerful electric flashlight blinded them while a masculine voice with a distinctly youthful ring to it demanded:

"Who's there?"

To their consternation, the girls felt the child bump into them as she backed away and there they all stood framed in a circle of light.

The glaring light with darkness behind it made it impossible for them to see the new arrival but Lucile knew instantly from the voice that it was the millionaire's son.

For a full moment no one spoke. The tick-tock of a prodigious clock in one corner of the room sounded out like the ringing of a curfew.

"Oh! I see," came at last in youthful tones

from the corner; "just some girls. And pretty ones, too, I'll be bound. Came to borrow a book, did you? Who let you in, I wonder. But never mind. Suppose you're here for a week-end at one of the cottages and needed some reading matter. Rather unconventional way of getting it, but it's all right. Just drop it in the mail box at the gate when you're done with it."

The girls suddenly became conscious of the fact that the child was doing her best to push them out of the door.

Yielding to her backward shoves, they sank away into the shadows and, scarcely believing their senses, found themselves apparently quite free to go their way.

"That," breathed Florence, "was awful decent of him."

"Decent?" Lucile exploded. "It — it was grand. Look here," she turned almost savagely upon the child, "you didn't intend to give that book back but you're going to do it. You're going to put it in that mail box to-night."

"Oh, no, I'm not," the child said cheerfully.

"You — you're not?" Lucile stammered. "What right have you to keep it?"

"What right has he? It does not belong to him. It belongs to Monsieur Le Bon."

"Why, that's nonsense! That —" Lucile broke off suddenly. "Look!" she exclaimed. "The boat's gone!"

It was all too true. They had reached the beach where they had left the boat. It had vanished.

"So we are prisoners after all," Florence whispered.

"And, and he was just making fun of us. He knew we couldn't get away," breathed Lucile, sinking hopelessly down upon the sand.

CHAPTER XVII

A BATTLE IN THE NIGHT

"Oh, brace up!" exclaimed Florence, a note of impatience creeping into her voice. "We'll get out of this place some way. Perhaps the boat wasn't taken. Perhaps it has — "

She stopped to stare away across the water.

"I believe it's out there away down the beach. Look, Lucile. Look sharp."

The moon had gone behind a small cloud. As it came out they could see clearly the dark bulk of the boat dancing on the water, which was by now roughening up before the rising storm.

"It's out there," exclaimed Florence. "We failed to pull it ashore far enough. There is a side sweep to the waves that carried it out. We must get it."

"Yes, oh, yes, we must!" the child exclaimed. "It wasn't mine; it was borrowed."

"You borrow a lot of things," exclaimed Florence.

"Oh, no, indeed. Not many, not hardly any at all."

"But, Florence, how can we get it?" protested Lucile.

"I'm a strong swimmer. I swam a mile once. The boat's out only a few hundred yards. It will be easy."

"Not with your clothes on."

Florence did not answer. She threw a glance toward the millionaire's cottage. All was dark there.

"Here!" Lucile felt a garment thrust into her hands, then another and another.

"Florence, you mustn't."

"It's the only way."

A moment later Florence's white body gleamed in the moonlight as she raced away down the beach to gain the point nearest the boat.

To the listening ears of Lucile and the child there came the sound of a splash, then the slow

plash, plash, plash of a swimmer's strokes. Florence was away and swimming strong. But the wind from off a point had caught the boat and was carrying it out from shore, driving it on faster than she knew.

Confident of her ability to reach the goal in a mere breath of time, she struck out at once with the splendid swing of the Australian crawl. Trained to the pink of perfection, her every muscle in condition, she laughed at the wavelets that lifted her up only to drop her down again and now and again to dash a saucy handful of spray in her face. She laughed and even hummed a snatch of an old sea song. She was as much at home in the water as in her room at the university.

But now, as she got farther from the shore, the waves grew in size and force. They impeded her progress. The shore was protected by a rocky point farther up the beach. She was rapidly leaving that protection.

Throwing herself high out of the water, she looked for the boat. A little cry of consterna-

tion escaped her lips. She had expected to find it close at hand. It seemed as far away as when she had first seen it.

"It's the wind off the point," she breathed. "It's taking it out to sea. It — it's going to be a battle, a real scrap."

Once more she struck out with the powerful stroke which carries one far but draws heavily upon his emergency fund of energy.

For three full moments she battled the waves; then, all but breathless, she slipped over on her back to do the dead man's float.

"Just for a few seconds. Got to save my strength, but I can't waste time."

Now for the first time she realized that there was a possibility that she would lose this fight. The realization of what it meant if she did lose, swept over her and left her cold and numb. To go back was impossible; the wind and waves were too strong for that. To fail to reach the boat meant death.

Turning back again into swimming position, she struck out once more. But this time

it was not the crawl. That cost too much. With an easy, hand-over-hand swing which taxed the reserve forces little more than floating, she set her teeth hard, resolved slowly but surely to win her way to the boat and to safety.

Moments passed. Long, agonizing moments.

Lucile on the shore, by the gleam of a flare of lightning, caught now and then a glimpse of the swimmer. Little by little she became conscious of the real situation. When it dawned upon her that Florence was in real peril, she thought of rushing to the cottage and calling to her assistance any who might be there. Then she looked at the bundle of clothing in her arms and flushed.

"She'd never forgive me," she whispered.

Florence, still battling, felt the spray break over her, but still kept on the even swing. Now and again, high on the crest of a wave, she saw the boat. She was cheered by the fact that each time it appeared to loom a little larger.

"Gaining," she whispered. "Fifty yards to go!"

Again moments passed and again she whispered, "Gaining. Thirty yards."

A third time she whispered, "Twenty yards."

After that it was a quiet, muscle-straining, heart-breaking, silent battle, which caused her very senses to reel. Indeed at times she appeared conscious of only one thing, the mechanical swing of her arms, the kick, kick of her feet. They seemed but mechanical attachments run by some electrical power.

When at last the boat loomed black and large on the crest of a wave just above her she had barely enough brain energy left to order her arms into a new motion.

Striking upward with her right hand, she gripped the craft's side. The next instant, with a superhuman effort, without overturning it she threw herself into the boat, there to fall panting across a seat.

"Wha — what a battle!" she gasped. "But I won! I won!"

For two minutes she lay there motionless. Then, drawing herself stiffly up to a sitting

position, she adjusted the oars to their oarlocks and, bending forward, threw all her magnificent strength into the business of battling the waves and bringing the boat safely ashore.

There are few crafts more capable of riding a stormy sea than is a clinker-built rowboat. Light as a cork, it rides the waves like a seagull. Florence was not long in finding this out. Her trip ashore was one of joyous triumph. She had fought a hard physical battle and won. This was her hour of triumph. Her lips thrilled a "Hi-le-hi-le-hi-lo" which was heard with delight by her friends on land. Her bare arms worked like twin levers to a powerful engine, as she brought the boat around and shot it toward shore.

A moment for rejoicing, two for dressing, then they all three tumbled into the boat to make the tossing trip round the wall to shore on the other side.

For the moment the book tightly pressed under the child's arm was forgotten. Florence talked of swimming and rowing. She talked

of plans for a possible summer's outing which included days upon the water and weeks within the forest primeval.

As they left the boat on the beach, they could see that the storm was passing to the north of them. It had, however, hidden the moon. The path through the forest and across the river was engulfed in darkness.

Once more the child prattled of haunts, spooks, and goblins, but for once Lucile's nerves were not disturbed. Her mind had gone back to the old problems, the mystery of the gargoyle and all the knotty questions which had come to be associated with it.

This night a new mystery had thrust its head up out of the dark and an old theory had been exploded. She had thought that the young millionaire's son might be in league with the old man and the child in carrying away and disposing of old and valuable books, but here was the child coming out to this all but deserted cottage at night to take a book from the young man's library.

"He hasn't a thing in the world to do with it," she told herself. "He — "

She paused in her perplexing problem to grip her companion's arm and whisper, "What was that?"

They were nearing the plank bridge. She felt certain that she heard a footstep upon it. But now as she listened she heard nothing but the onrush of distant waters.

"Just your nerves," answered Florence.

"It was not. I was not thinking of the child's foolish chatter. I was thinking of our problem, of the gargoyle's secret. Someone is crossing the bridge."

Even as she spoke, as if in proof of her declaration, there came a faint pat-pat-pat, as of someone moving on the bridge on tiptoe.

"Someone is shadowing us," Lucile whispered.

"Looks that way."

"Who is it?"

"Someone from the cottage perhaps. Watching to see what the child does with the book. She must take it back."

"Yes, she must."

"It might be," and here even stout-hearted Florence shuddered, "it might be that someone had shadowed us all the way from the city."

"The one who followed me the night I got caught in that wretched woman's house, and other times?"

"Yes."

"But he couldn't have gone all the way, not up to the cottage. He couldn't get through the fence and there was no other boat."

"Well, anyway, whoever it is, we must go on. Won't do any good standing here shivering."

Once more they pressed into the dark and once more Lucile resumed her attempt to disentangle the many problems which lay before her.

CHAPTER XVIII

FRANK MORROW JOINS IN THE HUNT

That she had reached the limit of her resources, her power to reason and to endure, Lucile knew right well. To go on as she had been day after day, each day adding some new responsibility to her already overburdened shoulders, was to invite disaster. It was not fair to others. The set of Shakespeare, the volume of Portland charts, the hand-bound volume from the bindery and this book just taken from the summer home of the millionaire, were all for the moment in the hands of the old man and the child. How long would they remain there? No one could tell save the old man and perhaps the child.

That she had had no part whatever in the taking of any of them, unless her accompanying of the child on this trip might be called taking

a part, she knew quite well. Yet one is responsible for what one knows.

"I should have told what I knew about the set of Shakespeare in the beginning," she chided herself. "Then there would have been no other problems. All the other books would be at this moment in their proper places and the old man and child would be—"

She could not say the words, "in jail." It was too terrible to contemplate! That man and that child in jail! And, yet, she suddenly remembered the child's declaration that she would not return the book to the summer cottage. She had said the book belonged to the old man. Perhaps, after all, it did. She had seen the millionaire's son in the mystery room talking to the old man. Perhaps, after all, he had borrowed the book and the child had been sent for it. There was some consolation in that thought.

"But that does not solve any of the other problems," she told herself, "and, besides, if she has a right to the book, why all this creep-

ing up to the cottage by night by way of the water. And why did he assume that she was borrowing it?"

And so, after all her speculation, she found herself just where she had left off; the tangle was no less a tangle than before.

"Question is," she whispered to herself, "am I going to go to the police or to the university authorities with the story and have these mysterious people arrested, or am I not?"

They reached the station just as the last train was pulling in. Florence and the child had climbed aboard and Lucile had her hand on the rail when she saw a skulking figure emerge from the shadows of the station. The person, whoever he might be, darted down the track to climb upon the back platform just as the train pulled out.

"That," Lucile told herself, "is the person who crossed the bridge ahead of us. He is spying on us. I wonder who he is and what he knows." A cold chill swept over her as if a winter blast had passed down the car.

When Florence had been told of what Lucile had seen, she suggested that they go back and see who the man was.

"What's the use?" said Lucile. "We can't prove that he's following us. It would only get us into another mess and goodness knows we're in enough now."

So, with the mystery child curled up fast asleep in a seat before them, hugging the newly acquired book as though it were a doll, they rattled back toward the city.

In spite of the many problems perplexing her, Lucile soon fell asleep. Florence remained to keep vigil over her companion, the child and the supposedly valuable book.

They saw nothing more of the mysterious person who had apparently been following them. Arrived at the city, they were confronted with the problem of the immediate possession of the latest of the strangely acquired volumes. Should the child be allowed to carry it to the mysterious cottage or should they insist on taking it to their room for safe keeping? They

talked the matter over in whispers just before arriving at their station.

"If you attempt to make her give it up," Florence whispered, "she'll make a scene. She's just that sort of a little minx."

"I suppose so," said Lucile wearily.

"Might as well let her keep it. It's as safe as any of the books are at that cottage, and, really, it's not as much our business as you keep thinking it is. We didn't take the book. True, we went along with her, but she would have gone anyway. We're not the guardians of all the musty old books in Christendom. Let's forget at least this one and let that rich young man get it back as best he can. He took the chance in allowing her to take it away."

Lucile did not entirely agree to all this but was too tired to resist her companion's logic, so the book went away under the child's arm.

After a very few hours of restless sleep, Lucile awoke with one resolve firmly implanted in her mind: She would take Frank Morrow's book back to him and place it in his hand, then

she would tell him the part of the story that he did not already know. After that she would attempt to follow his advice in the matter.

With the thin volume of "The Compleat Angler" in the pocket of her coat, she made her way at an early hour to his shop. He had barely opened up for the day. No customers were yet about. Having done his nine holes of golf before coming down and having done them exceedingly well, he was feeling in a particularly good humor.

"Well, my young friend," he smiled, "what is it I may do for you this morning? Why! Why!" he exclaimed, turning her suddenly about to the light, "you've been losing sleep about something. Tut! Tut! That will never do."

She smiled in spite of herself. Here was a young-old man who was truly a dear. "Why I came," she smiled again, as she drew the valuable book from her pocket, "to return your book and to tell you just how I came to have it."

"That sounds interesting." Frank Morrow,

rubbing his hands together as one does who is anticipating a good yarn, then led her to a chair.

Fifteen minutes later, as the story was finished, he leaned back in his chair and gave forth a merry chuckle as he gurgled, "Fine! Oh, fine! That's the best little mystery story I've heard in a long time. It's costing me two hundred dollars, but I don't begrudge it, not a penny of it. The yarn's really worth it. Besides, I shall make a cool hundred on the book still, which isn't so bad."

"Two hundred dollars!" exclaimed Lucile in great perplexity.

"Yes, the reward for the return of the book. Now that the mystery is closed and the book returned, I shall pay it to you, of course."

"Oh, the reward," she said slowly. "Yes, of course. But, really, the mystery is not ended — it has only just begun."

"As you like it," the shopkeeper smiled back. "As matters go, I should call the matter closed. I have a book stolen. You recover it and are able to tell me that the persons who stole it are

an old man, too feeble to work, and an innocent child. You are able to put your finger on them and to say, 'These are the persons.' I can have them arrested if I choose. I too am an old man; not so old as your Frenchman, yet old enough to know something of what he must feel, with the pinch of age and poverty dragging at the tail of his coat. I happen to love all little children and to feel their suffering quite as much as they do when they must suffer. I do not choose to have those two people arrested. That ends the affair, does it not? You have your reward; I my book; they go free, not because justice says they should but because a soft heart of an old man says they must." He smiled and brushed his eyes with the back of his hands.

Having nothing to say, Lucile sat there in silence.

Presently Frank Morrow began, "You think this is unusual because you do not know how common it is. You have never run a bookstore. You would perhaps be a little surprised to have

me tell you that almost every day of the year some book, more or less valuable, is stolen, either from a library or from a bookshop. It is done, I suppose, because it seems so very easy. Here is a little volume worth, we will say, ten dollars. It will slip easily into your pocket. When the shopkeeper is not looking, it does slip in. Then again, when he is not paying any particular attention to you, you slip out upon the street. You drink in a few breaths of fresh air, cast a glance to right and left of you, then walk away. You think the matter is closed. In reality it has just begun.

"In the first place, you probably did not take the book so you might have it for your library. Collectors of rare books are seldom thieves. They are often cranks, but honest cranks. More books are stolen by students than by any other class of people. They have a better knowledge of the value of books than the average run of folks, and they more often need the money to be obtained from the sale of such books.

"Nothing seems easier than to take a book

from one store, to carry it to another store six or eight miles away and sell it, then to wash your hands of the whole matter. Nothing in reality is harder. All the bookstore keepers of every large city are bound together in a loosely organized society for mutual protection. The workings of their 'underground railways' are swifter and more certain than the United States Secret Service. The instant I discover that one of my books has been carried off, I sit down and put the name of it on a multigraph. This prints the name on enough post cards to go to all the secondhand bookshops in the city. When the shopkeepers get these cards, they read the name and know the book has been stolen. If they have already bought it, they start a search for the person who sold it to them. They generally locate him. If the book has not yet been disposed of, every shopkeeper is constantly on the lookout for it until it turns up. So," he smiled, "you see how easy it is to steal books.

"And yet they will steal them," he went on. "Why," he smiled reminiscently, "not so long

ago I had the same book stolen twice within the week."

"Did you find out who it was?"

"In both cases, at once."

"Different people."

"Entirely different; never met, as far as I know. The first one was an out and out rascal; he wanted the money for needless luxuries. We treated him rough. Very rough! The other was a sick student who, we found, had used the money to pay carfare to his home. I did not even trouble to find out where his home was; just paid the ten dollars to the man who had purchased the book from him and charged it off on my books. That," he stroked his chin thoughtfully, "that doesn't seem like common sense — or justice, either, yet it is the way men do; anyway it's the way I do."

Again there was silence.

"But," Lucile hesitated, "this case is different. The mystery still exists. Why does Monsieur Le Bon want the books? He has not sold a single volume. Something must be

done about the books from the university, the Scientific Library and the Bindery."

"That's true," said Frank Morrow thoughtfully. "There are angles to the case that are interesting, very interesting. Mind if I smoke?"

Lucile shook her head.

"Thanks." He filled and lighted his pipe. "Mind going over the whole story again?"

"No, not a bit."

She began at the beginning and told her story. This time he interrupted her often and it seemed that, as he asked question after question, his interest grew as the story progressed.

"Now I'll tell you what to do," he held up a finger for emphasis as she concluded. He leaned far forward and there was a light of adventure in his eye. "I'll tell you what you do. Here's a hundred dollars." He drew a roll of bills from his pocket. "You take this money and buy yourself a ticket to New York. You can spare the week-end at least. When you get to New York, go to Burtnoe's Book

Store and ask for Roderick Vining. He sold me that copy of 'The Compleat Angler.' I sent out a bid for such a book when I had a customer for it and he was one of two who responded. His book was the best of the two, so I took it. He is in charge of fine binding in the biggest book store in his city. They deal in new books, not secondhand ones, but he dabbles in rare volumes on the side. Tell him that I want to know where he got the book; take the book along, to show you are the real goods. When he tells you where, then find that person if you can and ask him the same question. Keep going until you discover something. You may have to hunt up a half dozen former owners but sooner or later you will come to an end, to the place where that book crossed the sea. And unless I miss my guess, that's mighty important.

"I am sorry to have to send you — wish I could go myself," he said after a moment's silence. "It will be an interesting hunt and may even be a trifle dangerous, though I think not."

"But this money, this hundred dollars?" Lucile hesitated, fingering the bills.

"Oh, that?" he smiled. "That's the last of my profit on the little book. We'll call that devoted to the cause of science or lost books or whatever you like.

"But," he called after her, as she left the shop, "be sure to keep your fingers tight closed around the little book."

This, Lucile was destined to discover, was not so easily done.

CHAPTER XIX

LUCILE SOLVES NO MYSTERY

Buried deep beneath the blankets of lower 9, car 20, bound for New York, Lucile for a time that night allowed her thoughts to swing along with the roll of the Century Limited. She found herself puzzled at the unexpected turn of events. She had never visited New York and she welcomed the opportunity. There was more to be learned by such a visit, brief though it was bound to be, than in a whole month of poring over books. But why was she going? What did Frank Morrow hope to prove by any discoveries she might make regarding the former ownership of the book she carried in her pocket?

She had never doubted but that the aged Frenchman when badly in need of funds had sold the book to some American. That he should have repented of the transaction and

had wished the book back in his library, seemed natural enough. Lacking funds to purchase it back, he had found another way. That the ends justified the means Lucile very much doubted, yet there was something to be said for this old man because of his extreme age. It might be that he had reached the period of his second childhood and all things appeared to belong to him.

"But here," she told herself, rising to a sitting posture and trying to stare out into the fleeing darkness, "here we suddenly discover that the book came from New York. What is one to make of that? Very simple, in a way, I suppose. This aged Frenchman enters America by way of New York. He needs funds to pay his passage and the freight on his books to Chicago, so he sells one or two books to procure the money. Yet I doubt if that would be Frank Morrow's solution of the problem. Surely he would not sacrifice a hundred dollars to send me to New York merely to find out who the man was to whom the old Frenchman

had sold the book. He must think there is more to it than that — and perhaps there is. Ho, well," she sighed, as she settled back on her pillow, "let that come when it comes. I am going to see New York — N-e-w Y-o-r-k —" she spelled it out; "and that is a grand and glorious privilege."

The next moment the swing of the Century Limited as it click-clicked over the rails and the onward rush of scenery meant nothing to her. She was fast alseep.

Morning found her much refreshed. After a half hour in the washroom and another in the diner, over coffee and toast, she felt equal to the facing of any events which might chance to cross her path that day. There are days in all our lives that are but blanks. They pass and we forget them forever. There are other days that are so pressed full and running over with vivid experience that every hour, as we look back upon it, seems a "crowded hour." Such days we never forget, and this was destined to be such a day in the life of Lucile.

Precisely at nine o'clock she was at the door of Burtnoe's Book Store. To save time she had taken a taxi. The clerk who unfastened the door looked at her curiously. When she asked for Roderick Vining, she was directed by a nod to the back corner of the room.

She made her way into a square alcove where an electric light shining brightly from the ceiling brought out a gleam of real gold from the backs of thousands of books done in fine bindings.

Bending over a desk telephone was the form of a tall, slender-shouldered man.

"Are — are you Roderick Vining?" she faltered, at the same time drawing "The Compleat Angler" half out of her pocket.

His only answer was to hold up one long, tapering finger as a signal for silence. Someone was speaking at the other end of the wire.

With burning cheeks and a whispered apology, the girl sank back into the shadows. Her courage faltered. This was her introduction to New York; she had made a faux pas as her

first move; and this man, Roderick Vining, was no ordinary person, she could see that. There was time to study him now. His face was long, his features thin, but his forehead was high. He impressed her, seated though he was, as one who was habitually in a hurry. Pressing matters were, without doubt, constantly upon his mind.

Now he was speaking. She could not avoid hearing what he was saying without leaving the alcove, and he had not requested her to do that.

"Why, yes, Mrs. Nelson," he was saying, "we can get the set for you. Of course you understand that is a very special, de luxe edition; only three hundred sets struck off, then the plates destroyed. The cost would be considerable."

Again he pressed the receiver to his ear.

"Why, I should say, three thousand dollars; not less, certainly. All right, madam, I will order the set at once. Your address? Yes, certainly, I have it. Thank you. Good-bye."

He placed the receiver on its hook with as

little noise as if it had been padded, then turned to Lucile. "Pardon me; you wanted to see me? Sorry to keep you waiting."

"Frank Morrow sent me here to ask you where you purchased this book." She held the thin volume out for his inspection.

He did not appear to look at it at all. Instead, he looked her squarely in the eye. "Frank Morrow sent you all the way from Chicago that you might ask me that question? How extraordinary! Why did he not wire me? He knows I would tell him." A slight frown appeared on his forehead.

"I — I am —" she was about to tell him that she was to ask the next person where he got it, but thinking better of it said instead, "That is only part of my mission to New York. Won't you please look at the book and answer my question?"

Still he did not look at the book but to her utter astonishment said, while a smile illumined his face, "I bought that copy of 'The Compleat Angler' right here in this alcove."

"From whom?" she half whispered.

"From old Dan Whitner, who keeps a bookshop back on Walton place."

"Thank you," she murmured, much relieved. Here was no mystery; one bookshop selling a book to another. There was more to it. She must follow on.

"I suppose," he smiled, as if reading her thoughts, "that you'd like me to tell you where Dan got it, but that I cannot answer. You must ask him yourself. His address is 45 Walton place. It is ten minutes' walk from here; three blocks to your right as you leave our door, then two to your left, a block and a half to your left again and you are there. The sign's easy to read — just 'Dan Whitner, Books.' Dan's a prince of a chap. He'll do anything for a girl like you; would for anyone, for that matter. Ever been to New York before?" he asked suddenly.

"No."

"Come alone?"

"Yes."

He whistled softly to himself, "You western girls will be the death of us."

"When there's some place that needs to be gone to we go to it," she smiled half defiantly. "There's nothing so terrible about that, is there?"

"No, I suppose not," he admitted. "Well, you go see Dan. He'll tell you anything he knows." With that he turned to his work.

Lucile, however, was not ready to go. She had one more question to ask, even though it might be another faux pas.

"Would you — would you mind telling me how you knew what book I had when you did not see it?" she said.

"I did see it," he smiled, as if amused. "I didn't see it when you expected me to see it, that was all. I saw it long before — saw it when I was at the phone. It's a habit we book folks have of doing one thing with our ears and another with our eyes. We have to or we'd never get through in a day if we didn't. Your little book protruded from your pocket. I knew

you were going to say something about it; perhaps offer to sell it, so I looked at it. Simple, wasn't it? No great mystery about it. Hope your other mysteries will prove as simple. Got any friends in New York?"

"No."

He shook his head in a puzzled manner, but allowed her to leave the room without further comment.

CHAPTER XX

"THAT WAS THE MAN"

Dan Whitner was a somewhat shabby likeness of Roderick Vining; that is, he was a gray-haired, stoop-shouldered, young-old man who knew a great deal about books. His shelves were dusty, so too was a mouse-colored jacket.

Yes, he "remembered the book quite well." Lucile began to get the notion that once one of these book wizards set eyes upon an ancient volume he never forgot it.

"Strange case, that," smiled Dan as he looked at her over his glasses.

"Ah! Here is where I learn something of real importance," was the girl's mental comment.

"You see," Dan went on, "I sometimes have dinner with a very good friend who also loves books — the Reverend Dr. Edward Edwards.

Dinner, on such occasions, is served on a tea-wagon in his library; sort of makes a fellow feel at home, don't you know?

"Well, one of these evenings when the good doctor had an exceptional roast of mutton and a hubbard squash just in from the farm and a wee bit of something beside, he had me over. While we waited to be served I was glancing over his books and chanced to note the book you now have in your hand. 'I see,' I said to him jokingly, 'that you have come into a legacy.'

"'Why, no,' he says looking up surprised. 'Why should you think that?'

"I pointed to this little copy of 'The Compleat Angler' and said, 'Only them as are very rich can afford to possess such as this one.'

"He looked at me in surprise, then smiled as he said, 'I did pay a little too much for it, I guess, but the print was rather unusual; besides, it's a great book. I don't mind admitting that it cost me fifteen dollars.'

"'Fifteen dollars!' I exploded.

"'Got trimmed, did I?' he smiled back.

'Well, you know the old saying about the clergy, no business heads on them, so we'll let it stand at that.'

"'Trimmed nothing!' I fairly yelled. 'The book's a small fortune in itself; one of those rare finds. Why — I'd venture to risk six hundred dollars on it myself without opening the covers of it. It's a first edition or I'm not a book seller at all.'

"'Sold!' he cried in high glee. 'There are three families in my parish who are in dire need. This book was sent, no doubt, to assist me in tiding them over.'

"So that's how I came into possession of the book. I sold it to Vining at Burtnoe's, as you no doubt know."

"But," exclaimed Lucile breathlessly, feeling that the scent was growing fresher all the while, "from whom did the doctor purchase it at so ridiculous a price?"

"From a fool bookstorekeeper of course; one of those upstarts who know nothing at all about books; who handle them as pure merchandise,

purchased at so much and sold for forty and five per cent more, regardless of actual value. He'd bought it to help out some ignorant foreigner, a Spaniard I believe. He'd paid ten dollars and had been terribly pleased within himself when he made five on the deal."

"Who was he?" Lucile asked eagerly, "and where was his shop?"

"That I didn't trouble to find out. Very likely he's out of business by now. Such shops are like grass in autumn, soon die down and the snow covers them up. The doctor could tell you though. I'll give you his address and you may go and ask him."

The short afternoon was near spent and the shades of night were already falling when at last Lucile entered the shop of the unfortunate bookseller who had not realized the value of the little book. Lunch had delayed her, then the doctor had been out making calls and had kept her waiting for two hours. The little shop had been hard to find, but here at last she was.

A pitiful shop it was, possessing but a few

hundred volumes and presided over by a grimy-fingered man who might but the day before have been promoted from the garbage wagon so far as personal appearance was concerned. Indeed, as Lucile looked over the place she was seized with the crazy notion that the whole place, books, shelves and proprietor, had but recently climbed down from the junk cart.

"And yet," she told herself, "it was from this very heap of dusty paper and cardboard that this precious bit of literature which I have in my pocket, was salvaged. I must not forget that.

"I believe," she told herself with an excited intake of breath, "that I am coming close to the end of my search. All day I have been descending step by step; first the wonderful Burtnoe's Book Store with all its magnificence and its genius of a bookman, then Dan Whitner and the doctor, now this place, and then perhaps, whoever the person is who sold the book to this pitiful specimen of a bookseller."

Her heart skipped a beat as the bookman,

having caught sight of her, began to amble in her direction.

She made her question short and to the point. "Where did you get this book?"

"That book?" he took it and turned it over in his hand. He scratched his head. "That, why that book must have been one I bought with a lot at an auction sale last week. Want'a buy it?"

"No. No!" exclaimed Lucile, seizing the book. "It's not your book. It is mine but you had it once and sold it. What I wish to know is, where did you get it?"

Three customers were thumbing through the books. One seated at a table turned and looked up. His face impressed the girl at once as being particularly horrible. Dark featured, hook-nosed, with a blue birthmark covering half his chin, he inspired her with an almost uncontrollable fear.

"We — we —" she faltered "— may we not step back under the light where you can see the book better?"

The shopkeeper followed her in stolid silence. It was necessary for her to tell him the whole story of the purchase and sale of the book before he recognized it as having once been on his shelves.

"Oh, yes," he exclaimed at last. "Made five dollars on her. Thought I had made a mistake, but didn't; not that time I didn't. Where'd I get her? Let's see?"

As he stood there attempting to recall the name of the purchaser, Lucile's gaze strayed to an opening between two rows of books. Instantly her eyes were caught as a bird's by a serpent, as she found herself looking into a pair of cruel, crafty, prying eyes. They vanished instantly but left her with a cold chill running up her spine. It was the man who had been seated at the table, but why had he been spying? She had not long to wait before a possible solution was given her.

"I know!" exclaimed the shopkeeper at this instant, "I bought it from a foreigner. Bought two others from him, too. Made good money

on 'em all, too. Why!" he exclaimed suddenly, "he was in here when you came. Had another book under his arm, he did; wanted to sell it, I judge. I was just keeping him waiting a little so's he wouldn't think I wanted it too bad. If they think you want their books bad they stick for a big price." His voice had dropped to a whisper; his eyes had narrowed to what was meant to be a very wise-meaning expression.

"May be here yet." He darted around the stand of books.

"That's him just going out the door. Hey, you!" he shouted after the man.

Paying not the least attention, the person passed out, slamming the door after him.

Passing rapidly down the room, the proprietor poked his head out of the door and shouted twice. After listening for a moment he backed into the room and shut the door.

"Gone," he muttered. "Worse luck to me. Sometimes we wait too long and sometimes not long enough. Now some other lucky dog will get that book."

In the meantime Lucile had glanced about the shop. Two persons were reading beneath a lamp in the corner. Neither was the man with the birthmark. It was natural enough to conclude that it was he who had left the room.

"Did he have a birthmark on his chin, this man you bought the book from?" she asked as the proprietor returned.

"Yes, ma'am, he did."

"Then I saw him here a moment ago. When is he likely to return?"

"That no one can tell. Perhaps to-morrow, perhaps never. He has not been here before in three months. Did you wish to speak with him?"

Lucile shivered. "Well, perhaps not," she half whispered.

"Huh!" grunted the proprietor suddenly, "what's this? Must be the book he brought. He's forgotten it. Now he is sure to be back."

Lucile was rather of the opinion that he would not soon return. She believed that there had been some trickery about the affair of these

valuable books which were being sold to the cheapest book dealer in the city for a very small part of their value. "Perhaps they were stolen," she told herself. At once the strangeness of the situation came to her; here she was with a book in her possession which had been but recently stolen from Frank Morrow's book shop by a girl and now circumstances seemed to indicate that this very book had been stolen by some person who had sold it to this bookmonger, who had passed it on to the doctor who had sold it to Dan Whitner, who had sold it to Roderick Vining, who had sold it to Frank Morrow.

"Sounds like the house that Jack built," she whispered to herself. "But then I suppose some valuable books have been stolen many times. Frank Morrow said one of his had been stolen twice within a week by totally different persons."

Turning to the shopkeeper, she asked if she might see the book that had been left behind.

As she turned back the cover a low exclama-

tion escaped her lips. In the corner of that cover was the same secret mark as had been in all the mystery books, the gargoyle and the letter L.

Hiding her surprise as best she could, she handed the book to the man with the remark:

"Of course you cannot sell the book, since it is not your own?"

"I'd chance it."

"I'll give you ten dollars for it. If he returns and demands more, I will either pay the price or return the book. I'll give you my address."

"Done!" he exclaimed. "I don't think you'll ever hear from me. I'll give him seven and he'll be glad enough to get it. Pretty good, eh?" he rubbed his hands together gleefully. "Three dollars clean profit and not a cent invested any of the time."

Like the ancient volume on fishing, this newly acquired book was small and thin, so without examining its contents she thrust it beside the other in the large pocket of her coat.

"I suppose I oughtn't to have done it," she whispered to herself as she left the shop, "but if I hadn't, he'd have sold it to the first customer. It's evidence in the case and besides it may be valuable."

A fog hung over the city. The streets were dark and damp. Here and there a yellow light struggled to pierce the denseness of the gloom. As she turned to the right and walked down the street, not knowing for the moment quite what else to do, she fancied that a shadow darted down the alley to her left.

"Too dark to tell. Might have been a dog or anything," she murmured. Yet she shivered and quickened her pace. She was in a great, dark city alone and she was going — where? That she did not know. The day's adventures had left her high and dry on the streets of a city as a boat is left by the tide on the sand.

CHAPTER XXI

A THEFT IN THE NIGHT

There is no feeling of desolation so complete as that which sweeps over one who is utterly alone in a great city at night. The desert, the Arctic wilderness, the heart of the forest, the boundless sea, all these have their terrors, but for downright desolation give me the heart of a strange city at night.

Hardly had Lucile covered two blocks on her journey from the book shop when this feeling of utter loneliness engulfed her like a bank of fog. Shuddering, she paused to consider, and, as she did so, fancied she caught the bulk of a shadow disappearing into a doorway to the right of her.

"Where am I and where am I to go?" she asked herself in a wild attempt to gather her scattered senses. In vain she endeavored to re-

call the name of the street she was on at that moment. Her efforts to recall the route she had taken in getting there were quite as futile.

"Wish I were in Chicago," she breathed. "The very worst of it is better than this. There at least I have friends somewhere. Here I have none anywhere. Wish Florence were here."

At that she caught herself up; there was no use in wishing for things that could not be. The question was, what did she intend to do? Was she to seek out a hotel and spend the night there, to resume her search for the first person in America who had sold the ancient copy of the Angler, or was she to take the first train back to Chicago? She had a feeling that she had seen the man she sought and that weeks of search might not reveal him again; yet she disliked going back to Frank Morrow with so little to show for his hundred dollars invested.

"Anyway," she said at last with a shudder, "I've got to get out of here. Boo! it seems like the very depths of the slums!"

She started on at a brisk pace. Having gone a half block she faced about suddenly; she fancied she heard footsteps behind her. She saw nothing but an empty street.

"Nerves," she told herself. "I've got to get over that. I know what's the matter with me though; I haven't eaten for hours. I'll find a restaurant pretty soon and get a cup of coffee."

There is a strange thing about our great cities; in certain sections you may pass a half dozen coffee shops and at least three policemen in a single block; in other sections you may go an entire mile without seeing either. Evidently, eating places, like policemen, crave company of their own kind. Lucile had happened upon a policeless and eat-shopless section of New York. For a full twenty minutes she tramped on through the fog, growing more and more certain at every step that she was being followed by someone, and not coming upon a single person or shop that offered her either food or protection.

Suddenly she found herself in the midst of

a throng of people. A movie theater had disgorged this throng. Like a sudden flood of water, they surrounded her and bore her on. They poured down the street to break up into two smaller streams, one of which flowed on down the street and the other into a hole in the ground. Having been caught in the latter stream, and not knowing what else to do, eager for companionship of whatever sort, the girl allowed herself to be borne along and down into the hole. Down a steep flight of steps she was half carried, to be at last deposited on a platform, alongside of which in due time a train of electric cars came rattling in.

"The subway," she breathed. "It will take me anywhere, providing I know where I want to go."

Just as she was beginning to experience a sense of relief from contact with this flowing mass of humanity she was given a sudden shock. To the right of her, through a narrow gap in the throng, she recognized a face. The gap closed up at once and the face disappeared, but

the image of it remained. It was the face of the man she had seen in the shop, he of the birthmark on his chin.

"No doubt of it now," she said half aloud. "He *is* following me." Then, like some hunted creature of the wild, she began looking about her for a way of escape. Before her there whizzed a train. The moving cars came to a halt. A door slid open. She leaped within. The next instant the door closed and she was borne away. To what place? She could not tell. All she knew was that she was on her way.

Quite confident that she had evaded her pursuer, she settled back in her seat to fall into a drowsy stupor. How far she rode she could not tell. Having at last been roused to action by the pangs of hunger, she rose and left the car. "Only hope there is some place to eat near," she sighed.

Again she found herself lost in a jam; the legitimate theaters were disgorging their crowds. She was at this time, though she did not know it, in the down town district.

Her right hand was disengaged; in her left she carried a small leather bag. As she struggled through the throng, she experienced difficulty in retaining her hold on this bag. Of a sudden she felt a mighty wrench on its handle and the next instant it was gone. There could be no mistaking that sudden pull. It had been torn from her grasp by a vandal of some sort. As she turned with a gasp, she caught sight of a face that vanished instantly, the face of the man with the birthmark on his chin.

Instantly the whole situation flashed through her mind; this man had been following her to regain possession of one or both of the books which at this moment reposed in her coat pocket. He had made the mistake of thinking these books were in the bag. He would search the bag and then —

She reasoned no further; a car door was about to close. She dashed through it at imminent risk of being caught in the crush of its swing and the next instant the car whirled away.

"Missed him that time," she breathed. "He

will search the bag. When he discovers his mistake it will be too late. The bird has flown. As to the bag, he may keep it. It contains only a bit of a pink garment which I can afford to do without, and two clean handkerchiefs."

Fifteen minutes later when she left the car she found herself in a very much calmer state of mind. Convinced that she had shaken herself free from her undesirable shadow, and fully convinced also that nothing now remained but to eat a belated supper and board the next train for her home city, she went about the business of finding out what that next train might be and from what depot it left.

Fortunately, a near-by hotel office was able to furnish her the information needed and to call a taxi. A half hour later she found herself enjoying a hot lunch in the depot and at the same time mentally reveling in the soft comfort of "Lower 7" of car 36, which she was soon to occupy.

CHAPTER XXII

MANY MYSTERIES

One might have supposed that, considering she was now late into the night of the most exacting and exciting day of her whole life, Lucile, once she was safely stowed away in her berth on the train, would immediately fall asleep. This, however, was not the case. Her active brain was still at work, still struggling to untangle the many mysteries that, during the past weeks, had woven themselves into what seemed an inseparable tangle. So, after a half hour of vain attempt to sleep, she sat bolt upright in her berth and snapped on the light, prepared if need be to spend the few remaining hours of that night satisfying the demands of that irreconcilable mind of hers.

The train had already started. The heavy green curtains which hid her from the little

outside world about her waved gently to and fro. Her white arms and shoulders gleamed in the light. Her hair hung tumbled in a mass about her. As the train took a curve, she was swung against the hammock in which her heavy coat rested. Her bare shoulder touched something hard.

"The books," she said. "Wonder what my new acquirement is like?"

She drew the new book from her pocket and, brushing her hair out of her eyes, scanned it curiously.

"French," she whispered. "Very old French and hard to read." As she thumbed the pages she saw quaint woodcuts of soldiers and officers. Here was a single officer seated impressively upon a horse; here a group of soldiers scanning the horizon; and there a whole battalion charging a very ancient fieldpiece.

"Something about war," she told herself. "That's about all I can make out." She was ready to close the book when her eye was caught by an inscription written upon the fly leaf.

"Looks sort of distinguished," she told herself. "Shouldn't wonder if the book were valuable because of that writing if for nothing else." In this surmise she was more right than she knew.

She put the book carefully away but was unable to banish the questions which the sight of it had brought up. Automatically her mind went over the incidents which had led up to this precise moment. She saw the child in the university library, saw her take down the book and flee, saw her later in the mystery cottage on Tyler street. She fought again the battle with the hardened foster mother of the child and again endured the torturing moments in that evil woman's abode. She thought of the mysterious person who had followed her and had saved her from unknown terrors by notifying the police. Had that person been the same as he who had followed her this very night in an attempt to regain possession of the two books? No, surely not. She could not conceive of his doing her an act of kindness.

She thought of the person who had followed them to the wall of the summer cottage out at the dunes and wondered vaguely if he could have been the same person who had followed them on Tyler street at one time and at that other saved her from the clutches of the child's foster parents. She wondered who he could be. Was he a detective who had been set to dog her trail or was he some friend? The latter seemed impossible. If he was a detective, how had she escaped him on this trip? Or, after all, had she? It gave her a little thrill to think that perhaps in the excitement of the day his presence near her had not been noticed and that he might at this very moment be traveling with her in this car. Involuntarily she seized the green curtains and tried to button them more tightly, then she threw back her head and laughed at herself.

"But how," she asked herself, "is all this tangle to be straightened out? Take that one little book, 'The Compleat Angler.' The child apparently stole it from Frank Morrow; I

have it from her by a mere accident; Frank Morrow has it from one New York book shop; that shop from another; the other from a theologian; he from a third book shop; and that shop more than likely from a thief, for if he would attempt to steal it from me to-night, he more than likely stole it in the first place and was attempting to get it from me to destroy my evidence against him. Now if the book was stolen in the first place and all of us have had stolen property in our possession, in the form of this book, what's going to happen to the bunch of us and how are we ever to square ourselves? Last of all," she smiled, "where does our friend, the aged Frenchman, the godfather of that precious child, come in on it? And what is the meaning of the secret mark?"

With all these problems stated and none of them solved, she at last found a drowsy sensation about to overcome her, so settling back upon her pillow and drawing the blankets about her, she allowed herself to drift off into slumber.

The train she had taken was not as speedy

as the one which had taken her to New York. Darkness of another day had fallen when at last she recognized the welcome sound of the train rumbling over hollow spaces at regular intervals and knew that she was passing over the streets of her own city. Florence would be there to meet her. Lucile had wired her the time of her arrival. It certainly would seem good to meet someone she knew once more.

As the train at last rattled into the heart of the city, she caught an unusual red glow against the sky.

"Fire somewhere," she told herself without giving it much thought, for in a city of millions one thinks little of a single blaze.

It was only after she and Florence had left the depot that she noted again that red glow with a start.

The first indication that something unusual was happening in that section of the city was the large amount of traffic which passed the street car they had taken. Automobiles, trucks and delivery cars rattled rapidly past them.

"That's strange!" she told herself. "The street is usually deserted at this time of night. I wonder if the fire could be over this way; but surely it would be out by now."

At last the traffic became so crowded that their car, like a bit of debris in a clogged stream, was caught and held in the middle of it all.

"What's the trouble?" she asked the conductor.

"Bad fire up ahead, just across the river."

"Across the river? Why — that's where Tyler street is."

"Yes'm, in that direction."

"Come on," she said, seizing Florence by the arm; "the fire's down toward Tyler street. I think we ought to try to get to the cottage if we can. What could that child and the old Frenchman do if the fire reached their cottage? He'd burn rather than leave his books and the child wouldn't leave him; besides there are the books that belong to other people and that I'm partly responsible for. C'm'on."

For fifteen minutes they struggled down a

street that was thronged with excited people.

"One wouldn't believe that there could be such a crowd on the streets at this hour of the night," panted Florence, as she elbowed her way forward. "Lucile, you hang to my waist. We must not be separated."

They came to a dead stop at last. At the end of the river bridge a rope had been thrown across the street. At paces of ten feet this rope was guarded by policemen. None could pass save the firemen.

The fire was across the river but sent forth a red glare that was startling. By dint of ten minutes of crawling Florence succeeded in securing for them a position against the rope.

A large fire in a city at night is a grand and terrible spectacle. This fire was no exception. Indeed, it was destined to become the worst fire the city had experienced in more than forty years.

Starting in some low, ancient structures that lay along the river, it soon climbed to a series of brick buildings occupied by garment makers.

The flames, like red dragons' tongues, darted in and out of windows. With a great burst they leaped through a tar-covered roof to mount hundreds of feet in air. Burning fragments, all ablaze, leaped to soar away in the hot currents of air.

The firemen, all but powerless, fought bravely. Here a fire tower reared itself to dizzy heights in air. Here and there fire hose, like a thousand entwined serpents, writhed and twisted. Here a whole battery of fire engines smoked and there two powerful gasoline driven engines kept up a constant heavy throbbing. Roofs and walls crumbled, water tanks tottered and fell, steel pillars writhed and twisted in the intense heat, chimneys came crashing in heaps.

The fire had all but consumed the row of four-story buildings. Then with a fresh dash of air from the lake it burst forth in earnest, a real and terrible conflagration.

Lucile, as she stood there watching it, felt a thousand hitherto unexperienced emotions sweep over her. But at last she came to rest

with one terrible fact bearing down upon her very soul. Tyler street was just beyond this conflagration. Who could tell when the fire would reach the mysterious tumble-down cottage with its aged occupant? She thought of something else, of the books she might long since have returned to their rightful owners and had not.

"Now they will burn and I will never be able to explain," she told herself. "Somehow I must get through!"

In her excitement she lifted the rope and started forward. A heavy hand was instantly laid on her shoulders.

"Y' can't go over there."

"I must."

"Y' can't."

The policeman thrust her gently back behind the rope and drew it down before her.

"I must go," she told herself. "Oh, I must! I must!"

CHAPTER XXIII

INSIDE THE LINES

"Come on," Lucile said, pulling at Florence's arm. "We've got to get there. It must be done. For everything that must be done there is always a way."

They crowded their way back through the throng which was hourly growing denser. It was distressing to catch the fragments of conversation that came to them as they fought their way back. Tens of thousands of people were being robbed of their means of making a living. Each fresh blaze took the bread from the mouths of hundreds of children.

"T'wasn't much of a job I had," muttered an Irish mother with a shawl over her head, "but it was bread! Bread!" "Every paper, every record of my business for the past ten years, was in my files and the office is doomed," roared

a red-faced business man. "It's doomed! And they won't let me through."

"There's not one of them all that needs to get through more badly than I," said Lucile, with a lump in her throat. "Surely there must be a way."

Working their way back, the two girls hurried four blocks along Wells street, which ran parallel to the river, then turned on Madison to fight their way toward a second bridge.

"Perhaps it is open," Lucile told Florence.

Her hopes were short-lived. Again they faced a rope and a line of determined-faced policemen.

"It just must be done!" said Lucile, setting her teeth hard as they again backed away.

An alley offered freer passage than the street. They had passed down this but a short way when they came upon a ladder truck which had been backed in as a reserve. On it hung the long rubber coats and heavy black hats of the firemen.

Instinctively Lucile's hand went out for a

coat. She glanced to right and left. She saw no one. The next instant she had donned that coat and was drawing a hat down solidly over her hair.

"I know it's an awful thing to do," she whispered, "but I am doing it for them, not for myself. You may come or stay. It's really my battle. I've got to see it through to the end. You always advised against going further but I ventured. Now it's do or die."

Florence's answer was to put out a hand and to grasp a fireman's coat. The next moment, in this new disguise, they were away.

Had the girls happened to look back just before leaving the alley they might have surprised a stoop-shouldered, studious-looking man in the act of doing exactly as they had done, robing himself in fireman's garb.

Dressed as they now were, they found the passing of the line a simple matter. Scores of fire companies and hundreds of firemen from all parts of the city had been called upon in this extreme emergency. There was much con-

fusion. That two firemen should be passing forward to join their companies did not seem unusual. The coats and hats formed a complete disguise.

The crossing of the bridge was accomplished on the run. They reached the other side in the nick of time, for just as they leaped upon the approach the great cantilevers began to rise. A huge freighter which had been disgorging its cargo into one of the basements that line the river had been endangered by the fire. Puffing and snarling, adding its bit of smoke to the dense, lampblack cloud which hung over the city, a tug was working the freighter to a place of safety.

"We'll have to stay inside, now we're here," panted Lucile. "There's a line formed along the other approach. Here's a stair leading down to the railway tracks. We can follow the tracks for a block, then turn west again. There'll be no line there; it's too close to the fire."

"Might be dangerous," Florence hung back.

"Can't help it. It's our chance." Lucile was

halfway down the stair. Florence followed and the next moment they were racing along a wall beside the railway track.

A switch engine racing down the track with a line of box cars, one ablaze, forced them to flatten themselves against the wall. There was someone following them, the studious boy in a fireman's uniform. He barely escaped being run down by the engine, but when it had passed and they resumed their course, he followed them. Darting from niche to niche, from shadow to shadow, he kept some distance behind them.

"Up here," panted Lucile, racing upstairs.

The heat was increasing. The climbing of those stairs seemed to double its intensity. Cinders were falling all about them.

"The wind has shifted," Florence breathed. "It — it's going to be hard."

Lucile did not reply. Her throat was parched. Her face felt as if it were on fire. The heavy coat and hat were insufferable yet she dared not cast them away.

So they struggled on. And their shadow, like all true shadows, followed.

"Look! Oh, look!" cried Florence, reeling in her tracks.

A sudden gust of wind had sent the fire swooping against the side of a magnificent building of concrete and steel. Towering aloft sixteen stories, it covered a full city block.

"It's going," cried Lucile as she heard the awful crash of glass and saw flames bursting from the windows as if from the open hearth furnace of a foundry.

It was true. The magnificent mahogany desks from which great, high-salaried executives sent out orders to thousands of weary tailors, made quite as good kindling that night as did some poor widow's washboard, and they were given quite as much consideration by that bad master, fire.

"Hurry!" Lucile's voice was hoarse with emotion. "We must get behind it, out of the path of the wind, or we will be burned to a cinder." Catching the full force of her mean-

ing, Florence seized Lucile's hand and together they rushed forward.

Burning cinders rained about them, a half-burned board came swooping down to fall in their very path. Twice Lucile stumbled and fell, but each time Florence had her on her feet in an instant.

"Courage! Courage!" she whispered. "Only a few feet more and then the turn."

After what seemed an age they reached that turn and found themselves in a place where a breath of night air fanned their cheeks.

Buildings lay between them and the doomed executive building. The firemen were plying these with water. The great cement structure would be completely emptied of its contents by the fire but it would stand there empty-eyed and staring like an Egyptian sphinx.

"It may form a fire-wall which will protect this and the next street," said Florence hopefully. "The worst may be over."

CHAPTER XXIV

SECRETS REVEALED

On a night such as this, one does not stand on formalities. There was a light burning in the mystery cottage on Tyler street. The girls entered without knocking.

The scene which struck their eyes was most dramatic. On a long, low couch lay the aged Frenchman. Beside his bed, her hair disheveled, her garments blackened and scorched by fire, knelt the child. She was silently sobbing. The man, for all one could see, might be dead, so white and still did he lie.

Yet as the girls, still dressed in great coats and rubber hats, stepped into the room, his eyes opened; his lips moved and the girls heard him murmur:

"Ah, the firemen. Now my books will burn,

the house will go. They all will burn. But like Montcalm at Quebec, I shall not live to see my defeat."

"No, no, no!" the child sprang to her feet. "They must not burn! They shall not burn!"

"Calm yourself," said Lucile, advancing into the room and removing her coat as she did so. "It is only I, your friend, Lucile. The fire is two blocks away and there is reason to hope that this part of Tyler street will be saved. The huge concrete building is burning out from within but is standing rugged as a great rock. It is your protection."

"Ah, then I shall die happy," breathed the man.

"No! No! No!" almost screamed the child. "You shall not die."

"Hush, my little one," whispered the man. "Do not question the wisdom of the Almighty. My hour has come. Soon I shall be with my sires and with my sons and grandsons; with all the brave ones who have so nobly defended our beloved France.

"And as for you, my little one, you have here two friends and all my books. It is in the tin box behind the books, my will. I have no living kin. I have made you my heir. The books are worth much money. You are well provided for. Your friends here will see that they are not stolen from you, will you not?"

Florence and Lucile, too touched to trust themselves to speak, bowed their heads.

"As for myself," the man went on in a hoarse whisper, "I have but one regret.

"Come close," he beckoned to Lucile. "Come very close. I have something more to tell you."

Lucille moved close to him, something seeming to say to her, "Now you are to hear the gargoyle's secret."

"Not many days ago," he began, "I told you some of my life, but not all. I could not. My heart was too sore. Now I wish to tell you all. You remember that I said I took my books to Paris. That is not quite true. I started with all of them but not all arrived. One box of them, the most precious of all, was stolen while

on the way and a box of cheap and worthless books put in its place.

"Heartbroken at this loss, I traced the robbers as best I could at last to find that the books had been carried overseas to America.

"I came to America. They had been sold, scattered abroad. The thief eluded me, but the books I could trace. By the gargoyle in the corner and by the descriptions of dealers in rare books, I located many of them.

"Those who had them had paid handsomely for them. They would not believe an old man's story. They would not give them up.

"I brought suit in the courts. It was no use. No one would believe me.

"Young lady," the old man's voice all but died away as his feeble fingers clutched at the covers, "young lady, every man has some wish which he hopes to fulfill. He may desire to become rich, to secure power, to write a book, to paint a great picture. There is always something. As for me, I wished but one thing, a very little thing: to die with the books, those

precious volumes I had inherited. The foolish wish of a childish old man, perhaps, but that was my wish. The war has taken my family. They cannot gather by my bedside; I have only my books. And, thanks to this child," he attempted to place his hand on the child's bowed head, "thanks to her, there are but few missing at this, the last moment.

For a little there was silence in the room, then the whisper began again, this time more faint:

"Perhaps it was wrong, the way I taught the child to get the books. But they were really my own. I had not sold one of them. They were all my own. She knows where they came from. When I am gone, if that is the way of America, they may all be returned."

Lucile hesitated for a moment, then bent over the dying man.

"The books," she whispered. "Were two of them very small ones?"

The expression on the dying man's face grew eager as he answered, "Yes, yes, very small

and very rare. One was a book about fishing and the other — ah, that one! — that was the rarest of all. It had been written in by the great Napoleon and had been presented by him to one of his marshals, my uncle."

Lucile's hand came out from behind her back. In it were two books.

"Are these the ones?" she asked.

"Yes, yes," he breathed hoarsely. "Those are the very most precious ones. I die — I die happy."

For a second the glassy eyes stared, then lighted up with a smile that was beautiful to behold.

"Ah!" he breathed, "I am happy now, happy as when a child I played beneath the grapevines in my own beloved France."

Those were his last words. A moment later, Lucile turned to lead the silently weeping child into another room. As she did so, she encountered a figure standing with bowed head. It was the studious looking boy who had donned the fireman's coat and followed them.

"Harry Brock!" she whispered. "How did you come here?"

"I came in very much the same manner that you came," he said quietly. "I have been where you have been many times of late. I did not understand, but I thought you needed protection and since I thought of myself as the best friend you had among the men at the university, I took that task upon myself. I have been in this room, unnoticed, for some time. I heard what he said and now I think I understand. Please allow me to congratulate you and — and to thank you. You have strengthened my faith in — in all that is good and beautiful."

He stepped awkwardly aside and allowed her to pass.

CHAPTER XXV

BETTER DAYS

There was no time for explanations that night. The fire had been checked; the cottage and the rare books were safe, but there were many other things to be attended to. It was several days before Lucile met Harry Brock again and then it was by appointment, in the Cozy Corner Tea Room.

Her time during the intervening days was taken up with affairs relating to her new charge, the child refugee, Marie. She went at once to Frank Morrow for advice. He expressed great surprise at the turn events had taken but told her that he had suspected from the day she had told the story to him that the books had been stolen from Monsieur Le Bon.

"And now we will catch the thief and if he

has money we will make him pay," he declared stoutly.

He made good his declaration. Through the loosely joined but powerful league of book sellers he tracked down the man with the birth-mark on his chin and forced him to admit the theft of the case of valuable books. As for money with which to make restitution, like most of his kind he had none. He could only be turned over to the "Tombs" to work out his atonement.

The books taken from the university and elsewhere were offered back to the last purchasers. In most cases they returned them as the child's rightful possession, to be sold together with the many other rare books which had been left to Marie by Monsieur Le Bon. In all there was quite a tidy sum of money realized from the sale. This was put in trust for Marie, the income from it to be used for her education.

As for that meeting of Lucile and Harry in the tea room, it was little more than a series of

exclamations on the part of one or the other of them as they related their part in the mysterious drama.

"And you followed us right out into the country that night we went to the Ramsey cottage?" Lucile exclaimed.

"Yes, up to the wall," Harry admitted. "The water stopped me there."

"And it was you who told the police I was in danger when that terrible man and woman locked me in?"

Harry bowed his assent.

He related how night after night, without understanding their strange wanderings, he had followed the two girls about as a sort of bodyguard.

When Lucile thought how many sleepless nights it had cost him, her heart was too full for words. She tried to thank him. Her lips would not form words.

"But don't you see," he smiled; "you were trying to help someone out of her difficulties and I was trying to help you. That's the way

the whole world needs to live, I guess, if we are all to be happy."

Lucile smiled and agreed that he had expressed it quite correctly, but down deep in her heart she knew that she would never feel quite the same toward any of her other fellow students as she did toward him at that moment. And so their tea-party ended.

Frank Morrow insisted on the girls' accepting the two-hundred-dollar reward. There were two other rewards which had been offered for the return of missing books, so in the end Lucile and Florence found themselves in a rather better financial state.

As for Marie, she was taken into the practice school of the university. By special arrangement she was given a room in the ladies' dormitory. It was close to that of her good friends, Lucile and Florence, so she was never lonely, and in this atmosphere which was the world she was meant to live in she blossomed out like a flower in the spring sunshine.